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THE

WORKS

OF

WILLIAM MASON, M. A.

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THE

WORKS

OF

WILLIAM MASON, M. A.

PRECENTOR OF YORK, AND RECTOR OF ASTON.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

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THE

WORKS

OF

WILLIAM MASON, M. A.

VOL. IV.

CONTAINING

SERMONS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS. ESSAY ON THE MEANING OF THE WORD ANGEL, AS USED BY ST. PAUL. EXAMINATION OF THE PROPHECY IN THE 24th CHAPTER OF ST. MATTHEW.

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ERRATA.

Page 115, last line note, dele *present*: also dele *present*, p. 238, l. 1.
232, — 2, between *not* and *conceive* add *I.*
234, — 6, for *has* read *hath*
250, — 13, between *two* and *distinct* add *specific.*
257, — 1, for *the right* read *his right.*
266, — 1, for *all tribes* read *all the tribes*
266, — 7 of annotations, for *of vengeance* read *of his vengeance.*

ON THE

USE OF THE WORLD,

AS PERMITTED BY

REVELATION.

SERMON I.*

1 Cor. vii. 31.

——— USE THIS WORLD AS NOT ABUSING IT, FOR THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD PASSETH AWAY.

SERIOUS and speculative persons have, in all ages, (amid their general researches after truth) made the use and value of the world a principal object of their consideration, in order that they might proportion their esteem for it to its real and intrinsic worth; and the importance of the subject authorised their pains; for as this material world is the place allotted for our present abode, it is incumbent upon us that, next to forming right conceptions of that Supreme Being who placed us here, we should form right conceptions of that system of beings in which we are placed. Yet it must be confessed that, however diligent men may have been in searching after the truth on this question, their opinions have been various, and their conclusions sometimes contradictory. It would be no unentertaining disquisition (were this the proper place

* The following Sermons were all printed by the Author, but none of them were published by him except the 14th.

for it) to trace Philosophy through her several schools of antiquity, and to observe how, in each of them, she inculcated a different doctrine upon this point. Here we should find the haughty Stoic, wrapt in the idea of his own internal virtue, treating the world with disregard and indifference; while the churlish Cynic, from his real or pretended abhorrence of external vice, spurns it with contempt and detestation. Here the grave disciple of Pythagoras, looking upon it as an august drama, in which he is to perform various, and some important parts, beholds it with veneration and awe: and there the careless pupil of Epicurus, fancying it but a trifling farce, soon to be closed by the curtain of death, selects the most agreeable scenes he can find in it for his enjoyment, passing over the rest with a careless disregard. But, without searching into antiquity for instances of this dissimilitude of opinion, we may find them (where it will be more to our purpose to find them) amongst the speculative part of our own age.

By this term I would be understood to mean such persons as employ their studies in the search of moral and religious truths, and, in consequence of that search, form to themselves different modes of practical conduct. To separate these into their several classes, would be not only to enumerate all the sects into which Christianity is unhappily divided, but also to distinguish between the more unhappy, and almost as numerous, degrees of

Scepticism and Infidelity; a task on both parts alike disagreeable and unnecessary. But it may not be amiss slightly to examine the extremes of both, and to give, in a contrasted view, the tenets and practice of two parties the most opposite to each other, that of enthusiastic Bigotry, and sceptical Free-thinking. This, perhaps, with the assistance of the rule in the text, will lead us to discover that opinion which the rational Christian ought to maintain.—To begin with the ENTHUSIASTIC BIGOT.

Gloomy ideas of God and nature, early imbibed with the rest of the prejudices which attend an ill-tutored infancy, or caught afterwards from the cant of some wild enthusiast, have taught him to behold every object around him in the darkest and most unpleasing point of view; the beauties which arise from the simplicity of nature, or from the symmetry of art; the curious researches of abstract reasoning, or the creative efforts of the imagination, have no charms to attract his soul: "Vanity of vanities! all is vanity!" That aphorism of Solomon, ill understood, is his favourite tenet, his perpetual exclamation: and what, from texts of the Old Testament he finds occasion thus to stigmatize with the title of Vanity, he quickly learns from texts of the New, equally misapplied, to brand with the name of Sin. Thus the most innocent pleasures are immediately converted into unpardonable crimes; and not content to

abstain from them himself, he expects that the rest of mankind should do the same; and those who do not he is ever ready, with much self-complacency, to condemn to everlasting reprobation.

Where a mind is enveloped by so dark a gloom of prejudice, we must in vain seek for any of the gentle, the humane, the social qualities in its composition. It is not to be expected that the man who finds nothing amiable or useful to himself in the system of Nature, should ever endeavour to render himself an useful or amiable part of it: and, in fact, we find that persons of this sort generally seclude themselves from the rest of the world, and contract all their interests as much as may be towards their own centre; nay, their very charity takes the same confined cast, and parcels itself out in small, unmeaning, ineffectual alms; without any thing of the true, masculine, diffusive nature of Christian benevolence, which extends itself from individuals to families, from families to our country, from our country to the whole race of mankind.

By the lines which I have sketched out of this character, I would not be thought to describe every Bigot or Enthusiast, for of these there are various and almost infinite degrees; my meaning was to shew the effects of this temper in its extreme; and I should wish to be understood in the same manner with respect to what I

am going to speak of that very opposite character, the SCEPTICAL FREE-THINKER.

Dubious as he is (or as he endeavours to make himself) of every thing both prior and posterior to his own existence, he thinks it the wisest thing he can do, to bound all his views within the period of that existence: and having examined into the visible face of Nature, though he cannot conclude himself placed in a system of complete felicity and perfection, yet, as the portion of good in it seems superior to the portion of evil, he concludes it to be the production, either of some fortunate concourse of atoms, or else of some benevolent being, who meant him to be as happy in it as the general system would allow; in consequence of this, his principal rule of conduct is to do whatever may promote his present happiness; and therefore he uses indiscriminately whatever object he can meet with, which his reason, but more frequently his passions, persuade him is conducive to that end. If he fortunately happens to have so much constitutional coolness, as not to hurry him into pleasures, which tend immediately to weaken his rational, or impair his sensitive faculties, his situation is for some time not unflattering:* yet Satiety too soon commences: Invention

* We have seen a recent instance of this in the life and character of the late Mr. David Hume, whose ruling passion, if we may trust his own Memoirs, seems to have been a love, I will not say of fame, but of literary celebrity; which appears to have been

is called in to remove it: but, as Invention cannot long supply new amusements without borrowing aid from Luxury, that aid is quickly demanded; and Luxury, having led her deluded follower through all the wilds of vanity and of folly, leaves him at length to himself, to drag out the remainder of a dissipated life, goaded by the stings of a guilty conscience, or at best burning with a fever of unsatisfied desires.

How different, how contradictory are these two characters? The Bigot foolishly imagines that all the variety of beauties and blessings which God has scattered through the material universe, are so many snares which Satan makes use of to trepan his soul into the pit of destruction: the Infidel as foolishly persuades himself that these are the only blessings and beauties that he was formed capable of enjoying. One refuses to taste the wholesomest draught of pleasure, as if tinged with the deadliest poison; the other snatches her intoxicating cup, and drinks of it even to its foulest dregs. In a word, the former deems the world his prison; the latter, his Paradise.

There needs little argument, I imagine, to convince us

so very strong in him, that he could even find gratification for his vanity, in the applause which French women of quality gave to his metaphysical talents. This passion, probably, did much towards preventing him from falling into any of the grosser vices.

that the principles which lead to both these extremes in conduct, are fallacious. Let us see then if we cannot, by the assistance of the text, discover a rule that may lead us to the rational medium.

But here I am well aware that the context does not permit me to take the words in the light of an inspired precept; for they are delivered only in an answer to certain questions proposed to St. Paul by the Corinthians, which answer seems to refer, in the way of prophetical forecast, to the approaching persecution under Nero.* Yet, though delivered by St. Paul, in his own person, "and not by commandment of the Lord," we may certainly infer from them a permission to use the world, provided we observe the restriction of not abusing it; and this consistently with the whole tenor of Revelation, which, teaching us that we are placed in the world as in a state of probation, necessarily implies that we ought to use it, and take a regular trial in it; otherwise we do all in our power to prevent it from being such a state, (a consideration, which at once confutes all the doctrines of monastic seclusion). But we find that the Apostle cautions us to be very circumspect and prudent in the use of it, because human events are in such perpetual fluctuation; our stay here so very precarious; and our entrance upon another world so near and so certain.

* See Mr. Locke's Comment on the place.

All which, I suppose, St. Paul means when he urges the reason in these terms, "because the fashion of this world passeth away:" For if by this expression he only meant, that its final dissolution would speedily be accomplished, and left us to infer that all our powers of perception would be dissolved with it, it might seem of little consequence whether we abused the world or no. The generality of mankind would certainly range even to the utmost boundaries of sensuality, and think themselves justified by reason in so doing; "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," would then be the fundamental rule in every rational system of ethics.

But as this sense of the words is repugnant to the express doctrines of Him, who brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel, we must conclude the Apostle's meaning to be, that the uncertainty of our duration here, and the assured belief of a future state of rewards and punishments hereafter, are the only reasons to induce us to keep a strict watch over ourselves in this important point; important indeed only as it refers to that future state, yet on that account surely of the last importance.

Let this consideration therefore prompt us to make such a liberal, manly, and rational use of the world, that it may serve all the great and generous purposes (and many they are) to which virtue and religion can adapt

it: let us use it as persons who have a right and property in the good things which it contains: yet let us so use it as not to diminish the sum of happiness we find in it: but by every social and charitable art endeavour to increase the proportion. Let us look upon it with a complacency and satisfaction similar to that of its high Creator when he formed it, and though, since that original formation, it may have lost much of its real perfection, yet we shall still see that it is good. Good for exercising our rational faculties, and for improving them; good for calling forth all the latent virtues in our bosoms, and for increasing them. Its past history will furnish us with numerous examples worthy our imitation: its present condition will afford us many occasions to exhibit those examples in our practice. The successes we may meet with in it, may give us ample scope for manifesting our gratitude to that God from whom they were derived. The calamities which may befall us, will give us room to exercise the no less meritorious talents of resignation and patience. Nay, the very vices and temptations with which it abounds may, in avoiding them, employ our prudence, and in opposing them, exercise our fortitude.

For purposes great and beneficial as these, may the rational Christian use the world; and to such purposes he who uses it may rest assured that when the fashion of this world passeth away, the fashion of another and a better shall commence, which shall not pass away;

where he shall be rewarded with eternal happiness, and admitted to it by this gracious approbation of his Redeemer and his Judge, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

ON THE

SELF-SATISFACTION

WHICH RESULTS FROM THE

PRACTICE OF MORAL DUTIES.

SERMON II.

Prov. xiv. 14.

—— THE GOOD MAN SHALL BE SATISFIED FROM HIMSELF.

HUMAN wisdom seems to concur with divine in acknowledging the truth of this assertion, having given us a common proverb, similar to this of the text, "That Virtue is its own reward." And, indeed, if a very high degree of internal satisfaction did not result from the practice of moral duties, the state of good men in this life would be far from eligible: placed, as we are, in a world where the success of our actions is seldom certain, and sometimes seemingly fortuitous, if no pleasure arose from the actual energy (as we may call it) of virtue, it is to be feared the distant hopes of future recompense would scarce counterbalance the present pangs of disappointment and distress. Thus much is certain, that mankind would lose one cogent motive to goodness, and that which, perhaps, of all others, operates most powerfully on ingenuous and noble dispositions.

We see, therefore, it has pleased the mercy of the Almighty graciously to annex a kind of innate principle of delight and satisfaction to every virtuous and moral action, and to every vicious one the contrary sensation of abhorrence and disgust: so that as the good man is satisfied from himself, the bad man is dissatisfied from himself; as Virtue is its own reward, so is Vice its own punishment; and this independently of contingencies, independently of the good or bad success with which the event of their several actions is attended.

But it may be observed upon this subject, that as there is a possibility of carrying some sorts of virtue to an excess, so it is still more possible to carry the self-approbation which results from them to even a culpable extreme. It is possible, nay it very frequently happens, that actions, but moderately virtuous, produce in the agent an immoderate degree of complacency and self-esteem. Hence arise pride, vanity, contempt of others, inordinate self-love, and a train of such like vices, which more than eclipse the original virtues from which they sprung.

Two sects of antient philosophers, the Stoics amongst the Greeks, and the Pharisees amongst the Jews, afford us pregnant instances of the truth of this assertion; who, though both of them zealous in the practice of virtue, though the one placed happiness in absolute rectitude of

action, and the other (which amounted to the same thing) in scrupulously adhering to the dictates of the Mosaical law; yet we know the haughtiness of Stoicism became proverbial, and that Pharisaical righteousness was deemed hypocrisy by a judge who could not err, even by Christ himself.

And that this should frequently be the case, is obvious from the imperfection of our common nature; obvious too from the very essence of virtue, which is calculated to refine and elevate the soul, to exalt its conceptions, and to stimulate the creature to an imitation of its Creator. When therefore Virtue, thus in her own nature addicted to high pursuits, chances to obtain the ascendency in a mind naturally lofty and aspiring, it is apt sometimes to stretch beyond its pitch, and to carry the soul into extremes that even border upon vice. Reason indeed has it in its power to put a check upon these luxuriances; but reason, on these kind of dispositions, has seldom its due influence: for such a person is ever apt to make comparisons between himself and others, who either really have not, or he fancies have not, made so great advances in moral perfection as himself. Self-love also joining the inquisition, the sentence becomes extremely partial. Pride, arrogance, and contempt, therefore, necessarily spring from the contemplation. Hence, like the presumptuous Jew in the parable, the vain-glorious moralist becomes too apt to thank his God, that

he is not like other men; to exalt his own good works, and to aggravate the faults of his neighbour, whose single virtue of humility is yet more acceptable in the sight of God, than the ostentatious parade of all his own put together, and the sinner goes home to his house justified rather than the other.

To remedy these defects, Revelation comes to our assistance, and employs several of its divine precepts in regulating and reproving this over-weening arrogance. It teaches every man to think not more highly of himself than he ought to think; and assures us that after we have done our best, we are yet but unprofitable servants.

But it may be urged, "Is not this carrying matters very far on the other hand? Does not this destroy all the self-satisfaction which the text teaches us results from virtue and holiness? Do not the words of Christ seem to contradict the words of Solomon; and in effect inculcate this very opposite doctrine, that even the best man ought to be dissatisfied with himself, since he is told, that after he has done his best, he is yet but an unprofitable servant?"

In answer to this, it need only be replied, that this doctrine refers rather to the perfections of God than the imperfections of man. Nothing can be a more undoubted truth, than that to a Being so infinitely perfect

as the Almighty Creator of the universe, the best of our imperfect service can afford no kind of profit or advantage: but how true soever this be, though man is unprofitable to his Maker, he is not therefore unprofitable to himself, or to his fellow-creatures. No surely. By regulating and restraining his passions, he may secure his own happiness; by acts of humanity and charity, he may increase the happiness of society; and by adding to these true Religion and Piety, he may be sure of procuring the favour of his God, not indeed because he is profitable unto him, but because he is an useful member of that universe which is the work of God's hands. The doctrine therefore thus understood, we see, is far from abridging that satisfaction and pleasure which arises from virtuous sensations or actions; it only inculcates humility and godly diffidence of ourselves: Virtues which, when once rendered habitual to our minds, so as it were to become a part of our rational nature, and to constitute the frame and temper of our souls, tend perhaps more than any other to increase and establish that tranquillity of soul, without which it cannot possibly taste any genuine, unpolluted satisfaction.

Hence, though we allow that because the doctrines and precepts of Christianity inculcate a more perfect scheme of morality, and require more arduous efforts of holiness and godly zeal than any human system can pretend to, the Disciple of Christ ought not to be so easily

satisfied with himself, as other moralists have generally been; yet we still assert, that if he conscientiously perseveres in the path of duty prescribed to him by his Redeemer, going on from grace to grace, as he commands him, he has no cause to be dissatisfied with himself; on the contrary, his religion will contribute various comforts, which mere morality can never furnish, superior degrees of happiness and delight to those that spring from common virtuous habits, and naturally good inclinations.

This I shall endeavour to make evident in the sequel of this discourse, and to prove, that if the good man has reason to be satisfied from himself, the good Christian has reason to be much more so.

It has been frequently said, and Infidelity delights itself much in the assertion, that amongst all the various systems of antient philosophy, there is one so perfect, when considered as a scheme of morality, that it even supersedes Christianity itself. The morality I mean is that of the Stoics. I shall therefore attempt to draw a short comparison between the apathy, or unfeeling fortitude, which was a fundamental doctrine in that school, and the virtues of patience and humility, which make so capital a part of the religion of Christ: if therefore it can be made to appear that these latter are more agreeable to our frame and constitution, and more productive

of internal peace and comfort than the other, the conclusion will be that Christianity is much more calculated to promote the satisfaction which results from virtue, than that philosophy which is deemed, and perhaps justly, the best which the world was acquainted with before life and immortality were brought to light by the Gospel.

It is well known that the leaders of the sect of which I am speaking endeavoured to persuade their followers, that whatever was external to the mind was totally below its regard; that the interests of body and soul were entirely independent one of another; and therefore that whatever pain or calamity might be inflicted on the body, was, or ought to be, unfelt by the soul, which, fortified within itself, was absolutely incapable of being affected by any thing from without. Natural evils therefore were held in contempt, and treated with disdain, as enemies incapable of doing the wise man any detriment. Hence the soul acquired such a supercilious haughtiness, that, not content to suffer with constancy, the Stoic pretended not to suffer at all, but to be as invulnerable to evil as the Deity himself. Let us hear, in full proof of this fact, the wild apostrophe which one of these philosophers puts into the mouth of God himself, whom he supposes thus to address his ideal sages: "Since," says he, "I could not place you in a system "of beings in which you might be out of the reach of

" natural evils, I armed you against them all: Bear " them therefore with fortitude, by this means you have " an advantage even over the Deity himself. He indeed " is beyond the sense of evils, but you are above the " sense of them."*

Let us turn from a philosophy, capable of inspiring such absurd sentiments, to take a short view of that patience and resignation which Christianity substitutes in their stead. Let us behold the humble and sincere follower of the patient Jesus, suffering the extremity of evil, yet feeling it, and owning that he feels it; but at the same time supported by that submissive reliance on the Almighty power, without whose permission he knows no pain can be inflicted upon him: and who only suffers it to be inflicted, that the sufferer may be benefited by it: he goes through the trial with a constancy and tranquillity; a joy that strikes his persecutors with admiration and with reverence. It is not that he pretends to stifle his groans through fear of dishonouring his holy profession; but it is the holiness of that religion he professes which stifles those groans, by the lively hopes and pious confidence which it inspires; it is not that he despises his persecution, because he thinks himself more

* Quia non poteram vos istis (malis) subducere, animos vestros adversus omnia armavi. Ferte fortiter: hoc est quo Deum antecedatis; ille extra patientiam malorum est, vos supra patientiam. Seneca de Providentia, cap. vi.

holy than his persecutors, but because he knows he can endure no persecution so great as that which a far holier person than himself, his Master and his Redeemer, suffered for his sake. Thus, in the severest trials he gains that ascendency over his own passions which secures him a victory over all his sufferings; and though he feels his sorrows like a man, yet, by bearing them like a Christian, he is sure to rise from the conflict more than conqueror.

A very little consideration will indeed soon convince us that no virtues, except those of resignation and humility, are able to maintain the soul in a state of peace and satisfaction when the enemy oppresses him, and when malignity and injustice on all hands assail him. Was he to endeavour to surmount the injury by despising it, he must feel his bosom tormented with the uneasy sensations of disdain and contempt. Was he to strive to return the injury by revenging it, he would then become a prey to the turbulent passions of anger, hatred, and revenge; but by humility and patience he prevents the bad effects of them all, and preserves a tranquillity of soul that exalts him far above all his enemies. What an innocent, what a happy artifice is this, (says an eloquent writer*) which the Gospel grace teaches us? without prompting us to assume an ill-placed arrogance, or to affect a false insensibility; it bids us only humble ourselves before our

* See M. Fontenelle's *Discours sur la Patience*, from which, also, some sentiments in the preceding paragraph are taken.

Creator to become superior to our fellow-creatures; bids us only reverence him in the instruments that he employs, to be proof against the rudest and severest strokes with which those instruments can assail us.

As this is undoubtedly true, with what zeal ought we to endeavour after these virtues, from which, and which alone, we see all true internal satisfaction and contentment arise? How constantly ought we to shew that dutiful submission to the divine will; that patient forbearance of one another; that humble distrust of our own merits, which only will make us acceptable to God, useful to society, and happy in ourselves? These are duties peculiarly Christian, and duties also which peculiarly promote that self-satisfaction which the text teaches us results from the practice of virtue. Do we want any motives stronger than this inward happiness to induce us to the practice of these duties? strong as that motive is, we do; daily experience proves that we do; and therefore our holy religion is ready to afford them. Its benign Author, solicitous every way to draw us to himself, though chiefly by cords of love, has not left other methods unemployed. To humane and benevolent dispositions, naturally inclined to practise virtue for its own intrinsic excellence, he has only to describe that excellence, and to shew its concomitant satisfactions. To minds that sympathize less with this moral pleasure, he holds forth the palm of a future reward, in order to encourage them boldly to run

the race that is set before them. And, lastly, to others of a more obdurate cast, who neither perceive the beauty of Virtue, nor feel respect to the recompence of her promised rewards, he lifts up the rod of divine vengeance, and thunders forth the denunciation of future punishments: thus, giving a triple sanction to his doctrine, he means, that by it the whole race of mankind should become virtuous here, and, in proportion as they become virtuous, become happy, both here and hereafter. That those to whom Virtue seems not its own reward at present, the hopes of a future reward may inlist under her banners; and that those whom neither present nor future rewards can influence, the dread of punishment may force into felicity.

But as this last is, of all others, the meanest motive to obedience that a man, much more a Christian, can act upon, it is to be hoped that the love of virtue, joined to the love of the Author of virtue, will afford us a far nobler principle of action: thus shall we live as men, convinced of the truth of that elevated sentiment of St. John, with which I conclude this discourse: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment: he that feareth is not made perfect in love."*

To this perfection of love, grant, O blessed Lord, that

* 1 John iv. 18.

we may all aspire; so that, being satisfied with well doing here, we may be found acceptable in thy sight hereafter, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ thy Son our Saviour. Amen.

ON THE

CONNECTION

BETWEEN

RELIGION AND LIBERTY.

SERMON III.

2 Cor. iii.—Part of the 17th verse.

WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS, THERE IS LIBERTY.

THE liberty of the Gospel dispensation, in contra-distinction to the burthensome ritual of the Jewish worship, is that to which St. Paul immediately points in this passage. Yet it is the peculiar excellency of the inspired writings, that they abound more than any other with general truths; and that too in places directed to a partial purpose. This excellency however, great as it is, has been frequently over-looked, and more frequently misapplied. For, divest these kind of aphorisms of their context, and the sectarist is ever more ready to make them speak the sense of his own creed, than the general dictates of Christianity. Thus, in the text before us, the Quietist, taking the Spirit of the Lord to mean that preternatural impulse, which he believes has a sensible operation within his own bosom, fancies himself freed by it from every bond of moral obligation. In like manner the Fanatic, in the last century, actuated by the same

enthusiastic principle, imagined himself set at liberty from all the ties of civil obligation. The one turning the grace of the Lord into lasciviousness, the other into licentiousness. But to leave these forced constructions under that load of absurdity, which Enthusiasm only can digest, we shall find that if, by the Spirit of the Lord, we understand the influence of true Religion; and by Liberty, the advantages of Civil Freedom, the text will convey to us a most important general truth, which will naturally be explained under the two following propositions:

I. That, in any civil establishment where the liberty and property of individuals are best secured, the people cannot enjoy that happiness which results from their liberty, unless they be a religious as well as free people.

II. That a land of liberty is the only one favourable to the true cultivation of this religious principle.

By the former of these we prove that, "Where the spirit of the Lord is there only is Liberty:" by the latter, that, where Liberty is, there ought to be found the spirit of the Lord.

I.

It has been said, "That there is a nation on the globe, the very fundamental object of whose constitution is

political freedom :* I need not intimate to this audience where the nation is to be found, they will instinctively perceive, and feel a happy glow from the perception, that it is not far from every one of them. They will therefore readily allow, that, if the British constitution cannot provide for the happiness of individuals without the aid of Religion, no other in the world can. With reference therefore to the Liberty of Great-Britain, may I have leave to pursue my argument? It will, I hope, receive additional force from employing this medium, it will bring the truth home to our own business and bosoms, and become the more convincing, in proportion as it is the more interesting and engaging.

"Political Liberty" is justly defined, "to consist in that tranquillity of mind which results from a consciousness of self-security. In order to produce which, it is necessary that the mode of government be such, that no single citizen in it can stand in dread of another."† This is peculiarly the case of our happy establishment, in which this self-security is so perfect, that public credit rests on no other basis than the stability of private property. Where therefore there can be no oppression, one should imagine there can be no distress: and in fact, politically speaking, there can be none; that is, none that can arise from the constitution itself. If there be

* L'Esprit des Loix, Liv. xi. chap. 5th.
† L'Esprit des Loix, Liv. xi. chap. 6th.

any, it must spring from another cause; a cause, which, alas, it is not very difficult to investigate; it must arise from the baneful influence of private vices; and till these be proved not only public but private benefits, (to the latter of which Infidelity has not yet ventured to extend her mock demonstration) we may safely rest our cause on the good old Stoical doctrine, that "every degree of vice induces a proportionable degree of slavery." A doctrine which has received additional force and vigor from the Gospel itself. It would be endless to quote the particular passages; and indeed where vice is considered in the extreme, so as to occasion a total dissoluteness of manners, the shameful servitude that attends it, is too apparent to need a proof from that high authority. Let us rather examine into its effects when it is countenanced by fashion, reckoned among the refinements of civil life, and when it puts on so plausible an appearance as, in many instances, to pass, with the young and unwary, for an innocent, if not a laudable, amusement.

Let us first take the case of Gaming, which, while pursued at proper intervals, and restrained to moderate sums, may perhaps, in persons of fortune, be amongst the most harmless of their pleasures. But how seldom is it kept within these limits; how soon does it become a habit? and when it is such, is even Avarice itself a more rigorous, a more tyrannical master? Ask any man,

who has suffered it to get the ascendency in his breast if he has not often felt the innate love of liberty recoil against it? If he answers ingenuously, he will confess how often it has forced him into the worst company, the worst hours, the worst behaviour; to the wasting of his health, the killing of his time, the degradation of his rank, the impoverishment of his fortune. Beset with debts of honour, how often to satisfy these has he been obliged to postpone satisfying the debts of justice: when he is in this situation, I would ask, what is become of his Liberty as a Briton? I would ask if he still feels himself that manly, free, independent being which he was originally by his birth-right? and which no alteration in the constitution, no tyrant, but one within his own bosom, has either influenced or opprest?

In like manner might the man of Gallantry be interrogated. He who, descending as little as possible from his dignity as a man, mixes a degree of sentiment with his sensual appetites, and, in the indulgence of them, preserves some delicacy of taste, and decorum of manners. I speak not of the profligate debauchee; the instance would be too gross, the proof too glaring for my purpose: for in this more polished character we shall find flaws enough to abate its lustre; and be soon convinced that these pursuits have a direct tendency to servitude, even in cases (which are but rare) where they avoid infamy. There is a neighbouring Nation, the

fundamental principle of whose constitution is said to be Honour, as ours is Liberty. In that country it is well known how long and how universally the spirit I am speaking of has reigned, nor are the ill effects of it less notorious: for is it not *there* ever diverting the stream of Honour from running in its direct course? and might it not, if equally prevalent *here*, have the same prejudicial influence on the ampler tide of our Liberty? But, leaving this question undecided, I would ask if there is not something in the very nature of these pursuits incompatible with the dignity and freedom of man? Does it not, sometimes, tempt him to be the seducer of that innocence of which God constituted him the protector? Does it not, at other times, debase him into a station the very reverse of that which nature intended him to fill in the system of creation, and of that which policy ordained him to hold in the order of civil society? This consideration, exclusive of more cogent arguments that might be drawn from religion, is sufficient to shew that this passion can never be safely indulged, but when sanctified by the laws of God and our country, and when a sympathy of accordant hearts is legitimated by the nuptial union. This only can prevent one party from becoming a slave, because this only can fix the other a friend; for, whatever the heat of fancy may suggest, reason assures us that no alliance can be durable which is not founded on mutual and equal interest.

The same sort of reflections might, with propriety, be extended to many other vices which fashion terms pleasures, and which luxury is ever apt to introduce into opulent communities. But the instances already produced prove sufficiently what was at first asserted, that every degree of vice carries with it a proportionable degree of slavery, and consequently prevents us from enjoying the full benefit of those civil blessings which our constitution enables us to enjoy. Is it then necessary to add, that we ought to oppose to these temptations, the prudent reserve and rational self-denial which our holy religion directs us to employ; and that, laying aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, we endeavour to run liberally and manfully the race which is set before us?

We have the greatest encouragement to do this from the equitable form of government under which we live; which, as it rightly entitles this nation to be styled a Land of Liberty, will appear, in examining the second proposition, to be more favourable to the true cultivation of this religious principle than any other: so much so, that where liberty is, there ought to be found the spirit of the Lord.

II.

It ought to be found there especially, because in such states as have liberty for the basis of their constitution, there only can the spirit of the Lord be found uncon-

strained; and though the community may agree in adopting and giving to some one mode of faith, the sanction of a legal establishment, yet there only can be felt the happy effects of a legal toleration. With every other form of government experience has proved that it is inconsistent; while in this, it becomes a necessary principle: for it would be a contradiction in terms to call that nation free, where the minds of men are enslaved: and enslaved they must be, where opinion is made subject to penalty and persecution.

And yet, in this state of toleration, it may be objected that the Church of Rome is excepted from the general indulgence; but surely this exclusion is perfectly consistent with the most extensive freedom of religious sentiment, nay, perhaps it may appear even necessary to its very existence; for, as in the case of civil liberty, her preservation demands that a civil restraint shall be placed on the efforts of tyranny; so in the case of religious liberty, it is essential to the extent of toleration, vigilantly and vigorously to restrain a religion whose leading principle is an universal intolerance.* It is only the will to enslave, that is in either case deprived of the power, or, according to the inspired prediction of our Gospel freedom, it is only "captivity that is led captive."†

* See Mr. Locke's first Letter on Toleration.

† Psalm lxviii. 13.

How far this principle of toleration, thus intimately connected with the spirit of liberty, tends to promote the interests of true religion, will become evident from the following considerations.

1. As we have already proved that there subsists an inseparable union between the spirit of the Lord and Civil Liberty, so we may, from the whole tenor of history, stand assured, that there subsists a similar connection between Religious and Civil Slavery. The spiritual and temporal usurpers upon the rights of mankind, joined in one common interest, will mutually contribute to each others purposes; and where the secular arm has been made, or has voluntarily extended itself to be the executioner of ecclesiastical censures, and to force opinions upon mankind, it is natural to believe that unlimited obedience will be imposed as a religious tenet; that a dissent from this doctrine will be construed into impiety; and consequently that, in proportion as inordinate power is able to supersede the spirit of the Lord, all liberty to pronounce or even to inquire into his genuine dictates, will be restrained. Fear will generate a servile acquiescence, and hypocrisy, a vice, of all others, the most destructive to morality, the most abhorrent to the religion of Christ, will contribute its despicable artifices to conceal the real sentiments of the heart, or to feign an adherence to principles that it abhors.

The advantages therefore derived to true religion from toleration are evident; it takes from men every plausible pretext for deviating from the truth; for what need of concealing our real principles, or affecting to embrace those we think false, can subsist, when our honest professions are freed from civil censure?

2. As toleration prevents hypocrisy, it also greatly promotes the spirit of meekness and Christian forbearance. For, by taking away all power of applying secular force, it allows spiritual contention to use only its natural weapons, reason, persuasion, and argument. Zeal in a religious cause is ever warmer than in any other, and consequently more apt to fly out into insult and outrage. Under such an impulse every advantage the law gives, the bigot is ready, with much acrimony, to take, and to vindicate the cause of Christ, by methods which every page of his Gospel condemns. An established toleration prevents this effectually, and, by preventing it, introduces candour and peace in its room. It is true it cannot do this immediately. Prejudices, especially such as concern religion, to be destroyed perfectly, must be rooted out leisurely; and, in this salutary work, if toleration operate slowly, it still operates surely; introducing one Christian virtue after another, till in the end it establishes that universal charity which is its highest aim, and most beneficent intention.

3. It does this by permitting a liberty of debate, and a freedom of religious inquiry: both which, if, from the spirit of controversy, they at first occasion unwarrantable heat, are, at length, productive of the best and most peaceable consequences: for, by these, new truths are struck out; inveterate errors destroyed; doctrines which ignorance held diabolical are often proved harmless, if not rational; and others, which the same ignorance held sacred, are shewn to be contradictory and absurd. Thus by degrees the minds of men are enlarged, the hearts of different sects opened one to another, and when neither have been made proselytes, both have been made friends, learning a lesson, the hardest for the zealot to learn, and which toleration only can teach, that there may be found honest men in every persuasion. Hence we see (to recur to ourselves) that as Persecution, the blackest fiend that ever rose from hell to obstruct the Gospel of light and immortality, has for a long time been expelled from these happy nations, if universal charity has not yet appeared in its place, we must look elsewhere for the reason than in any defect of our constitution. We must look for it in the obliquity of our own hearts, in the general depravity of our manners: for I am well aware, that to all which has been said, an objector may reply, "Does the nation, established on this principle of liberty, excel as much in piety and virtue? Is it really as religious as it is free; and, if it be not, does not that one contradictory fact confute all this general theory?" It

does so. Yet surely it is still in our own power to make it not contradict it. It is in our own power to make the civil advantages we DO possess, productive of those religious advantages we do NOT possess. It has been shewn what these are, and they have been proved to be important enough to demand our election; nay, to inflame our ambition in the pursuit of them, if we are ambitious to be what our laws entitle us to be, Freemen and Britons; names we can never truly glory in, the privileges of which we can never fully enjoy, unless we be also sincere Christians. Let us reflect on this truth more particularly at this important season, when our gracious Sovereign is about to confirm to us these our natural rights by the sanction of a solemn oath taken upon the Gospels of Christ.* Let therefore those Gospels, which give the awful sanction, be looked upon by us all with love and veneration. Let the sacred truths they contain be diligently consulted and conscientiously practised. By these shall we be instructed to fear God, and honour the King; two Christian duties which will not fail, we may justly hope, to make us happy under the reign of a Prince, whom the genius of our constitution leads us to consider, not only as the GUARDIAN OF OUR LIBERTIES, but also under the more august title of DEFENDER OF OUR FAITH.

* This Sermon was preached at St. James's Chapel before his present Majesty, the Sunday immediately preceding his Coronation.

INFIDELITY AND ENTHUSIASM,

EQUALLY AVERSE FROM

RATIONAL ENQUIRY.

SERMON IV.

Acts, Chap. xvii. Verse 11th and part of the 12th.

THE JEWS OF BEREA WERE MORE NOBLE THAN THOSE IN THESSALONICA, IN THAT THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH ALL READINESS OF MIND, AND SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, WHETHER THOSE THINGS WERE SO. THEREFORE MANY OF THEM BELIEVED.

THE preceding verses of this chapter, acquaint us with the ill reception which St. Paul and his doctrine met with at Thessalonica. He went thither into the Jewish synagogue, and for three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, concerning the nature and efficacy of the sufferings of Christ, and of his resurrection from the dead. Some of the Jews were converted by his arguments, and several also of the devout Greeks; but those Jews who believed not stirred up the populace assaulted the house of Jason, and in the end drove Paul and Silas out of the city. The only reason they gave for this conduct was, that the preachers had done contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying there is another king, one Jesus. A plain proof, that they were merely

moved by prejudice and envy, and had not in the least attended to the Apostle's doctrine; otherwise the crucified Saviour, whom he preached, could never have been supposed to be set up by St. Paul, as a rival of the earthly empire of Cæsar. The character of the Jews of Berea, as described in the text, is a fine contrast to these; I shall therefore beg leave to enlarge a little on the particulars of it.

First, We are told that they were more noble than the former, "In that they received the word with all readiness." And what greater proof can a man give of a noble and ingenuous disposition, than that of lending a ready unprejudiced attention to any person who offers new arguments to be examined, new doctrines to be ascertained? How liable is the generality of mankind to be misled by appearances, and biassed by old prepossessions? How apt to reject even truth itself, unheard, if it come either unexpectedly, or unsupported by personal authority? Novelty indeed has its charms, but these only when it clashes with no favourite passions, or does not counteract any established opinions; but if this happen, disgust generally arises, and the doctrine, and he who delivers it, are treated with ignominy and contempt. Not such was the behaviour of the Bereans to St. Paul; they heard him readily, and therefore without partiality: and though he asserted several things contrary to their preconceived notions, yet as they found he did not

merely assert them, but pretended, at least, to have scripture authority to found them upon, they had too much nobleness of mind to reject his doctrines, before they had tried them by that sacred touchstone, and found whether they bore its test.

Hence we may observe, secondly, that though they received the Apostle's doctrine with all that calmness and impartiality which is inherent in ingenuous minds, they did not assent to it with that blind temerity which prevails only on weak ones. While their candor led them to lend him a due attention, their prudence prompted them to give all he said a strict examination: willing to reject nothing that had reason and argument for its support, they were yet resolute to try whether all he offered was thus supported: and, as the Apostle had pointed out to them on what foundation his system was built, and had appealed to their own inspired writings for the truth of all he asserted, they studied those writings daily and with indefatigable attention, to discover whether "these things were so;" the result of this search, we find, was favourable to the Apostle's doctrine, for many of them therefore believed.

If I have justly explained the sense of the text, the three following propositions will seem naturally to arise from it:

I. That, in our enquiries after truth, all opinions ought to be heard with readiness, and received with candor, freedom, and impartiality;

II. That diligence should be used in the search after truth, and the arguments on both sides scrutinized with accuracy and precision;

III. That the truth of the Christian religion demands this test, and receives advantage from it.

These propositions may, perhaps, seem to a Christian audience, to have too much the nature of self-evidence and axiom, to require a formal proof; yet as, in the present age, the Enthusiast on the one hand, and the Libertine on the other, are apt to proceed in a manner diametrically opposite to them, I shall take the liberty to address them both in their turn on these two points.

I. And, first, I would ask the Enthusiast, if he be not at all times too apt to condemn, under the opprobrious denomination of worldly wisdom, that species of religious enquiry, which is employed in fixing the great objects of our faith and practice upon just and rational foundations? If he be not too prompt to despise, and even reprobate, the learned labours of some of the best and wisest of his species, when employed on this important task, and,

without meaning it, to take part with the infidel, and to imagine Christianity not founded on argument? I would ask him if sometimes, on the bare assertion of the overheated leader of his sect, he has not been led to brand many respectable persons with peculiar heretical names, at the same time without so much as understanding the meaning of the terms he employed for their reprobation? I would question him, whether he has not, at one time, taken the unintelligible jargon of some mad mystic for divine sublimity; at another, the vulgar cant of some illiterate fanatic, for apostolical simplicity? Again, with respect to the writers or preachers, whom he either condemns or approves, I would enquire what degree of examination he has bestowed on their several doctrines; has he read their works attentively, or listened to their discourses calmly and dispassionately? That he reads the Scriptures I will readily allow, but does he read them in their order, observe the connection of their parts, and thence deduce the true meaning of the whole? Are not a few detached passages, separated from their context, and consequently too often from their meaning, sufficient grounds for those opinions which he had before fancied true; and if he receive these from his favourite preacher, delivered with a sanctimonious look and fanatical tone, do they not come to him with a force of conviction, which makes all other explications of their sense in his eyes heretical, if not damnable?

But not to multiply questions, which I apprehend would be difficult on his part to answer, I will only observe to such persons as have not caught the too common contagion, that if they would preserve themselves free from it, they should search the Scriptures, for the whole truth, as it is in Jesus; they should consider the general tenor of his revelation of himself to mankind, taking to their assistance, in this important enquiry, such commentators, and only such, as have had this enlarged object in their view; and uniformly neglecting those, who, dilating on particular points for partial purposes, tend only to multiply strife and debate, and instead of mending the heart and ministering to good morals, too frequently mislead the judgment, and make shipwreck of that faith which they pretend to pilot into the very harbour of Truth.

II. Perhaps more than enough has been said against a class of deluded persons, who rather deserve our pity than our reproof. I turn secondly to a very different species of men, to persons whose want of candor proceeds not so much from their want of judgment, as from their want of using it; whose partiality and prejudice arise, not from any natural defect of the head, but from an acquired perversion of the heart: these are they whom the politeness of a neighbouring nation call Strong-thinkers, and on whom the courtesy of England has bestowed the no less

noble appellation of Free-thinkers: and, perhaps, there was a time when they deserved part, if not the whole of the title, because they really thought, and thought too for themselves: but, if we may trust the assertion of a sensible living French writer, by no means ill inclined to the sect, and one whose writings have even suffered in the cause, it is greatly to be feared that the present race of them is much degenerated; for, struck with the very frivolous turn of the age, and that ready carelessness with which men are apt to take every opinion upon trust, this author cannot help observing that "Infidelity is now become a species of Faith with the generality of the world."* A species of faith most certainly; for can that man be said to be an infidel on any other principle, who attends only to the discourse, and reads only the works of unbelievers; nay, who generally saves himself this latter trouble, and takes the bare word of Scepticism with all readiness, even without examining in its works whether "these things be so?" Were it insinuated to these persons that both sides of the question ought to be examined, that would be, in other words, advising them to read their Bible, and therefore, I am afraid, an ineffectual counsel: yet thus much surely might be expected from them, that they should form their infidel tenets into some sort of system, so as

* L'autorité est le grand argument de la multitude, et l'incrédulité, disoit un homme d'esprit, est une espèce de Foi pour la plus part des gens.

M. d'Alembert de l'Abus de la Critique en matière de Religion.

to be able to give a consistent account of the *want* of hope that is in them; which, instead of being able to effect, they rest perfectly self-satisfied, if, furnished with a few scraps of common-place ridicule, they can silence those arguments by a loud laugh, the force of which they are unable to elude, even by a plausible sophism. And here we may congratulate together the Enthusiast and Infidel of the present age, who have both of them learned so concise and commodious a way of arriving at their opposite ends; a method absolutely unknown to their predecessors, who, either from modesty or simplicity, never thought it possible to become adepts in their profession, without much previous probation, and the patient sufferance of either corporal or mental pain. Thus, for instance, before the Bigot of former times believed himself worthy to receive any miraculous illumination from above, he uniformly underwent the severest process of bodily mortification, consisting of all those watchings, fastings, and flagellations, which the austerity of his ghostly father thought proper to inflict. The Infidel too, with equal patience, submitted to the fatigue of much dry reading, and thought it necessary to confuse his ideas with much logical quibble and puzzling ratiocination, before he presumed to set up for himself, and to boast publicly that he was emancipated from priestcraft and popular error. At present we see all this absolutely unnecessary, it is now equally easy for a sinner to become a saint, and a dunce to become a deist: an over-heated

imagination on the one hand, and no imagination at all on the other, is all that is necessary to complete the metamorphosis: And this is so very true on the Infidel side, that one would imagine infidelity not only a species of faith, but a species of instantaneous illumination, since otherwise it is hard to find out how some people come to the possession of it. This parallel, it must be owned, brings the fashionable libertine into what he will call low company; but would he claim a title to higher, it behoves him to enter upon a course of study and reflection, for which his dissipated head and corrupt heart are, it is to be feared, but ill qualified. Nothing, however, is so self-evident, as that thinking is an art necessary to be learned, previous to free-thinking; and whether the gay circle of his amusements and pleasures, not to say of his vices, will leave him time for so fatiguing an employment, seems to be a matter extremely problematical.

But from you, my brethren, here met together at a season which our ecclesiastical establishment has appointed to be employed in a more peculiar attention to the offices of religion, and consequently to the study of its truth, and who, I doubt not, are convinced of the utility, if not the absolute necessity of appropriating certain portions of your time to both these important purposes; possessed, as I trust you are, not only of that candour and impartiality, the want of which has been shewn to be the

origin of bigotry and superstition, but endued also with those faculties of attentive reflection, which are the best securities against Infidelity and Libertinism; from you let me assure myself of better things: Let me trust that you will examine both the internal and external evidences of the faith once delivered to the Saints as accurately as you are able; and then let me venture to pronounce that you will own Christianity not only demands such a test, but receives advantage from it.

III. This was the third proposition which I said resulted from the text; its truth was exemplified in the Jews of Berea; we may therefore not unreasonably expect that our holy religion will prove equally acceptable to all other inquirers, who shall bring with them the same good qualities to the trial: Suffer me, therefore, to employ the few remaining moments, in exhorting to so important an inquiry.

First, From the object itself, which, the Scripture tells us, is no less than that of our eternal salvation; a weighty point, and what surely demands our deepest consideration. Does the Infidel controvert this? Does he assert that the duties of mere morality, deduced by the light of nature from the reason of things, will secure to us this inestimable blessing? Let us compare the ethical systems of the best of his philosophers, with that laid down in the Gospel; let us see which is the

most perfect in its parts, which has the surest foundation, the fullest sanction: But till we have done this, let us beware how we enlist ourselves under his banners, or engage in so dangerous a party.

Secondly, The rank we hold in the chain of created beings, affords another motive for entering upon this important task: Beings as we are, dependent on a God, from whose free gift we hold the glorious faculty of reason; a gracious God who seems, by the method in which he has revealed himself to us, to expect we should use that faculty in discovering the truth of his revelation. But the Enthusiast denies this, and tells us that he demands a blind submission of our reason; that he requires it to be absorbed in implicit uninquiring faith. We ought therefore to inquire what is the truth on this weighty subject; and, happily for us, the Scriptures, where only it is to be learned, are open to our inquiry. If therefore we are by them permitted to try all things, in order to find out and to abide by that which is right, let us not vainly imagine we ought to quench the light, which alone can enable us to make the trial.

Lastly, Let me enforce the necessity of this investigation from our particular situation as Englishmen; as the free subjects of a Protestant Prince, who governs us by laws, which, be it ever remembered, receive their sanction and vitality from that religion, the firm belief of which

must be admitted into our bosoms, before their authority can have its genuine influence over our actions. Under such a government, therefore, how necessary is it to be fully established in the true faith, in order to avoid Infidelity, which weakens the springs of government, and Fanaticism that destroys them. The last century is pregnant with examples of both these evils; for when Enthusiasm took the lead in opposing the oppressive measures of the first Charles, what but anarchy resulted from the opposition? And when Infidelity, imported with other French fopperies, by the second Charles, trampled on the ruins of demolished Fanaticism, what but Popery and arbitrary power followed in her train? Soon, indeed, did the mercy of the Almighty deliver us from the then impending ruin, and long has the same mercy preserved us in the purest state of civil and religious freedom. Let us then, with all thankfulness to the great Author, from whom every good and perfect gift cometh, stand fast in that liberty in which Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again in that yoke of bondage, which Enthusiasm on the one hand, and Infidelity on the other, mutually concur to fasten on the human mind.

ON

CHRISTIAN COMPASSION.

SERMON V.

John xi. 35.

JESUS WEPT———

THE Son of God shed tears; not those which spring from partial or private grief, but generous, social, sympathetic tears; for it is well known that this effusion of his divine tenderness was poured forth only a few moments before he exerted his miraculous power in raising Lazarus from the dead; when, meeting the afflicted sisters and relations of his deceased friend, and beholding the extremity of their distress, he instantly caught the soft infection, and lamented that calamity as a man, which he was about to relieve as a God. The Jews, it is true, who were spectators of the solemn scene, imputed these tears to the tenderness of private friendship. ——" Behold," say they, " how he loved him." And in their circumstances, surely, the reflection was natural, but the event points out to us another cause; for why should he weep at the death of a person, however dear to him, who, by his divine prescience, he knew would so shortly be restored to life and his society? No, it was

the distress of his afflicted disciples and friends that opened the sacred fountains of his sorrows; with these he "groaned in spirit, and was troubled;" with these he "wept." It was even more than this: it was a sympathy with the afflictions of mankind in general, ever liable, from the common causes of mortality, to have their breasts wounded with sorrows of this piercing sort, without alleviation, and without redress. May not we (if we can do it without presumption) suppose that some such benevolent reflections as the following, at that moment, arose in his compassionate mind? "How "many, alas! how many of my future followers, like "these, believing in my name, and having the same "pious confidence in my power, shall hereafter, like "these, be afflicted, and in the same dreadful degree, at "a time when I, their Saviour and their friend, am re-"moved from this terrestrial scene of things? They "shall call upon me, when the general laws of my "Father's Providence forbid me to answer: They shall "weep, when I must not dry their tears. Present as I "now am with these children of affliction, consoling "those sorrows with my pity, which I shall shortly re-"move by my power, to whom shall they fly for comfort "and succour in my absence? Who then shall heal the "wounds of groaning friendship, of brotherly, filial, or "conjugal affection? Be the tears, I now shed, their "future balm: Let my disciples yet unborn feel their "salutary influence. Faith shall apply them still fresh

" to their bosoms, and they shall rest assured, that he, " who once wept with their afflicted brethren upon earth, " shall ever compassionate their own calamities in " Heaven."

This apostrophe, I presume, will be allowed strictly consonant to the character of the Divine Speaker: But not to indulge myself farther in a mode of speaking, which some persons may think unusual in discourses from this place, I proceed to observe, that as Christ was born into the world, not only to redeem men from sin by his sufferings, but to instruct them in holiness by his example; that example ought uniformly and strictly to direct our practice in every station of life to which it can be applied.

Apply we it then at present to the case of consolation in general, and see how false the tenets of those men are, who would engraft on our holy Religion, the mean, the unfeeling, the unmanly principles of Stoicism; who, with a supercilious brow, a dry eye, and a callous heart, declaim to their afflicted brethren that all grief is sinful; that it argues a distrust of God's providence, and that the greatest earthly calamity ought to be of no moment to him, who has a firm belief in the promises of Revelation, and sure hopes of a blessed Eternity.—To this, and more than this, it is surely sufficient to reply, that JESUS WEPT, and, by mixing his tears with those of the

distressed, gave them his sanction; fully authorizing them to feel those sorrows like men, which his precepts and example would teach them to bear as Christians.

That private grief may be indulged to a very blameable extreme is not indeed to be denied, but the sorrows to which the text refers are of the more social and generous kind, and such as it is therefore almost impossible to carry to excess.—The more intimately we enter into the afflictions of our fellow-creatures, and the closer we assimilate our feelings to theirs, the nearer we approach the sacred pattern set before us. Compassion, therefore, in the largest and most absolute sense, being certainly a principal part of Christian perfection, it may not be amiss to employ the sequel of this discourse in pointing out some of the principal causes which prevent our beholding, in this nation, so many amiable examples of it as might earnestly be wished for, not only by every advocate for his Religion, but by every lover of his Country.

These impediments may be reduced to four articles.
The common motives to public charity;
The selfishness of enthusiastic zeal;
The prejudices of party;
And the folly of fashion.

I. It has been generally allowed, even by writers who have professedly satirized the manners of the times, that

a want of humanity and charity cannot justly be placed in the list of our national vices. The many noble structures, which have of late arisen for the relief of maladies and miseries of every species, have been justly quoted as proofs of our public humanity. This being an acknowledged truth, will it not be thought a strange paradox to assert, that these very institutions, proofs as they are of the point for which they are produced, are not equally so of our private sympathy and compassion? What! it is said, do not compassion and charity go hand in hand together? Is not the former always productive of the latter? It were to be wished it was so; but, alas! a very little reflection will convince us that precedent, caprice, and ostentation too frequently take the lead in these matters. To figure in a list, to direct our inferiors, or preside at a committee, are motives to which we may (without any breach of candour) impute much of this apparent benevolence. Besides this, how often does the plausibility of self-deceit persuade persons, that if they allot out of their annual income a due portion to the support of these public charities; nay, if they even bequeath to that use a competent sum after their decease, the debt of Christian humanity and compassion is amply discharged. That society is benefited by such donations is not to be questioned; nor would I be suspected of insinuating any thing against their decided utility: They are, in a national view, an honour to our country. All that is to be feared is, that, amongst individuals, a care-

less contribution to them is sometimes substituted for that nobler species of charity, which has its foundation in sentiment, and by which the heart of the donor is softened, and the moral qualities of it improved. Now, nothing is a clearer point in Christian morals than that all the virtues, which are peculiar to the Gospel system, have a double tendency; and, while they promote the welfare of the community, advance the moral perfection of the agent. The man, therefore, who in the act of charity, feels not his heart accompany his hand, and his pity prompt his generosity, may be assured that the spirit of the duty is wanting, and that, in the nervous phrase of St. Paul, his beneficence, with respect to himself, is merely as "sounding brass," and "a tinkling cymbal."

II. A second great impediment to the effects of genuine compassion, is that peculiar species of enthusiasm, at present so prevalent amongst us, the fundamental tenet of which, separating, as it does, Faith from good Works, leads directly to the most selfish and most contracted motives of action. This effect it produces two ways; first, by prompting the religious zealot to attempt working out his own salvation by means only of devotion abstracted from all secular concerns, which, though a duty occasionally necessary, cannot be so at all times, because were it constantly practised, it would prevent the exercise of all our more active moral duties;

and secondly, by impressing his imagination (which these devotional acts have overheated) with higher ideas of his own sanctity, than are compatible with that charity, with which he ought to treat his less sanctified neighbour. In a word, it leads him to distinguish the world into only two classes, that of Saints and of Sinners; and when these classes are once formed in his imagination, it is easy to ascertain to which of them only he will extend his compassion, and which he will (as indeed he is very apt with much self-complacency to do) consign to eternal damnation. But neither the place I am in, nor the audience I am before, make it necessary to dwell upon the bad effects of a delusion, which has its chief influence on the lower class of the people: I proceed rather to shew that the prejudices of Party are as great an obstruction to the exertion of this virtue.

III. By Party, I would be understood to mean, that blind and unscrupulous attachment to one or more fallible mortals like ourselves, which leads us to support and defend all their measures indiscriminately, and even to take a pride in so doing, as believing that thereby we preserve an uniformity and steadiness of character. This pride, like the enthusiastic species before mentioned, necessarily narrows the humane affections extremely, induces contempt for those who have enlisted themselves under other leaders, and absolute hatred for those who, even on very justifiable motives, have deserted their own.

Our own history, like that of all other free nations, teems with so many instances of the ill effects of this species of political partiality, that I may be well spared from insisting farther on so glaring a truth. It may be to more purpose if I intimate to those who read, and even see instances of this pest of society with abhorrence, that they ought to take good care not, on this account, to fall into that cold indifference and base neutrality, which they may think can only secure them from becoming party zealots, and this even in times which may call for the exertion of every patriotic principle. Genuine Patriotism (however the sacred word may be abused) is a very different thing from Party Spirit: it is that spirit only which I am here condemning, and in which, I trust, I am joined by every freeborn Englishman, and every loyal subject.

IV. The last cause I shall mention, is the folly of fashion, which shews itself so generally in that vain affectation of foreign manners, and that mean mimicry, by which persons of rank and fortune condescend to adopt the taste of a neighbouring nation, whose mode of life is totally artificial, refined far beyond the bounds of plain sense and genuine simplicity, and consequently, of all others, the least worthy to be imitated by Protestants and Britons. From hence it is, that, among other pernicious consequences, arise those false and fanciful distinctions in the orders of civil society, which are the greatest

obstruction to mutual benevolence, and diametrically opposite to the genius of our free Constitution. The just and natural titles to pre-eminence, which a noble birth, a liberal education, or an opulent fortune carried along with them, were all that our wiser ancestors either knew or regarded. Fashion and taste at present usurp the place even of the best of these qualifications. Thus an ideal distinction arises in social life, which every man forms for himself, or borrows from a fantastic original, and whoever corresponds not with it, is treated with ridicule, or consigned to contempt. Hence, therefore, as the religious Fanatic limits his benevolence to the pale of his own sect, the fashionable Fanatic (for he deserves no better title) confines his, if he has any, to his own modish circle. The rest of the world are, in the estimation of his heart, just what they are in his polite phrase, "People absolutely unknown, vulgar, and little better than savages." No wonder then that the distresses of such creatures should never come within the sphere of his compassion, when his taste puts even their existence below his notice.

Instead of these prejudices, these follies, come into our bosoms, and there perpetually reside, Humanity, [illegible] loveliest, thou most exalted of all the virtues! Come that masculine vigor of sentiment joined to that heart-felt fervor of social love, which, not contented with relieving the miseries of the wretched, is

proud to feel, to share, and to console them. The benign Author of our Being, we know, has affixed a melancholy kind of pleasure to these sensations, which far exceeds the giddy raptures of sensual delight; and the natural tendency of the human soul to indulge itself in these sympathetic sorrows is so strong, that to behold even fictitious spectacles of distress, and to sympathize with them, has, by all cultivated nations, been held one of the noblest of their amusements: insomuch that the best philosophers have concluded such representations tended to exalt and refine the heart, by purging it of its selfish passions, and by inducing in their stead the more humane and delicate affections.* However this be, we may safely assert, that this great theatre of the world abounds with real objects of pity and compassion sufficient to give the generous breast continual exercise for all its most benevolent powers. In these pleasing

* Aristotle's well-known definition of Tragedy here alluded to, has been very variously commented upon; but the sense followed is that which M. Rapin gives to it, "Le Philosophe "(says he) avoit reconnu *deux défauts* importans à régler dans "l'Homme, *l'Orgueil* et la *Dureté*, et il trouva le remède dans "la Tragédie." See Réflexions sur la Poetique, Sec. 17th. His whole explication of the passage is too long to be here quoted; but in defence of it let me be permitted to observe, that Aristotle by no means asserts that Tragedy purges *all* the passions, but those only which are allied to terror and pity, as the words δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν plainly indicate: an inattention to this distinction, has occasioned much misconception of the Philosopher's meaning.—See Arist. Poet. Sect. 6.

duties of humanity the poorest amongst us may emulate the richest; for all of us have hearts to pity, tongues to console, eyes to weep for the distresses of our brethren, if we have not abilities to relieve them. Let us then, as the servants of one God, subjects of one King, professors of one Faith, exemplify by our actions the happy effects of such an intimate union: let us be kindly affectionate one unto another; rejoice with those that rejoice; weep with those that weep; love as brethren, extending the still encreasing circle of our Christian good-will from individuals to our country, from our country to the whole race of mankind.

ON

CHRISTIAN COURTESY.

SERMON VI.

1 Peter iii. 8.

——— BE PITIFUL, BE COURTEOUS.

THE two virtues, which the Apostle here exhorts us to cultivate, have this essential difference, that the former is a natural principle, the latter an acquired habit. They may act, therefore, independently of one another, and in fact they frequently do so; yet it seldom, if ever, happens that they have even their own inherent efficacy, when they are thus disunited. On this account the inspired writer recommends them both together to our cultivation, intimating at the same time, in the order of his phrase, which is the superior of the two, and which, therefore, ought first and principally to be practised.

Following the same order, I shall first endeavour to discover why the principle of pity or compassion was made a part of our moral constitution: and this appears to have arisen from the ever-powerful exertion of that principle by our benevolent Creator. He gave it, in his mercy, to man, to remedy the slow, and oftentimes the

defective, steps which his reason would take towards relieving the wants of his fellow-creatures. He ordained it to be a strong and active passion, powerfully to impel us to this salutary business. He bad it act not only powerfully, but suddenly; to precede reason, and even sometimes to over-rule it. The many unavoidable miseries and accidents to which human life is subject, made this necessary, in order that, in cases of exigency, Compassion might bring that assistance in good time, which Reason would lend too late. This then is the final cause of pity. And have we not reason to bless the Giver of all good, that a passion so disinterested, so amiable, so pleasurable was implanted in our nature? Surely we have; since hereby those actions, which would otherwise only have had the consciousness of rectitude, and a distant hope for their present reward, in common with many other duties of life, become, even in their immediate exertion, the purest sources of satisfaction and delight.

But the other virtue of courtesy or affability arises not so much from our original feelings, as from a rational and well-weighed experience of its utility to ourselves and to society. Pity may be called (as it certainly is) a quality of the heart; courtesy is rather a quality of the head. The one, we have seen, acts before reason, and frequently against it; the other is generally under the direction, and never appears in opposition to it: for if

courtesy becomes extreme, and consequently irrational, it ceases to be that manly mode of behaviour which gives a generous attention to the tempers, inclinations, and even foibles of our friends and fellow-citizens. It ceases to be the thing for which it was meant, to accommodate us to society, by teaching us to overlook all pardonable defects in others, and by prompting us to disclaim all unjust superiority in ourselves. It degenerates into that spirit, or rather want of spirit, which complying with every fashionable vice, and ridiculing every unfashionable virtue, impudently assumes the name of politeness, and that indifference and indiscriminate approbation of good and bad, which passes with the world for the very height of urbanity. Genuine courtesy is the reverse of all this. It is true, it is ever ready to comply, ever prompt to approve; but it will comply only with what is honourable; it will approve only what reason assures it is worthy of approbation. It teaches us to please others, not merely that others may please us, but that we also may be pleased with ourselves; and it teaches us too that we cannot be thus pleased if we degrade our own dignity. It is, therefore, a capital security against every thing that is derogatory to truth and virtue, since by such derogation we do a violence to our convictions and feelings, we act uncourteously to conscience, our faithful monitor, our internal friend.

Such then are the merits of courtesy separately consi-

dered. Let us now see the use of it when it is joined, as the Apostle tells us it should be, with compassion or pity.

This being a natural passion, acts upon us (if we do not, as, alas! some too often do, harden our hearts against it) like all other natural passions, instantly and vigorously. We have only to yield ourselves up to our feelings whenever a fit object presents itself (and, heaven knows, in such a world as ours such objects are by no means unfrequent), to perceive its full impulse: but this impulse may be violent; so much so perhaps, that the very object of the passion may be disgusted with its violence, and take that for an insult which arose from the most benevolent of all sensations. Hence then arises the necessity of using every conciliatory aid of courtesy or address. She, and she only, can adapt the means to the end. The rude impetuous zeal of the one has constant occasion to be softened by the winning manners of the other: for if Pity makes an offering at the shrine of Misery; if she offers it ungraciously, it will be accepted with disdain; since even Misery may be disdainful, and is usually most pardonable for being so. In cases of this kind, therefore, Affability is of the greatest use and assistance to Compassion: But in all cases Compassion is much more so to Affability, insomuch that we may lay this down as an axiom, that if courtesy is not founded upon pity, it hardly deserves the name of a

virtue. Hence, therefore, the Apostle gives pity the precedence, because we must be pitiful before we can be truly courteous.

"We must be pitiful before we are courteous;" I repeat it, my brethren, because it is an important truth, and, like all other important truths, in this dissipated age, almost universally disregarded. It makes no part of the system of education which forms our youth; it makes no part of the practice of our maturest manhood. If we are taught either of these qualifications, it is only a kind of mechanical courtesy that we are taught, and that merely to excuse us from exercising our compassion, and to conceal our want of that and every other humane virtue. Thus taught, and thus practised, we may be assured it never acts powerfully enough to destroy any part of our self-interest; but leaves this meanest of all our passions its full sway and dominion over us; insomuch that whenever an object of real compassion offers itself to our view, she will retain the power still to check the native impulse of commiseration, by urging "that there may be fraud and imposture in the case;" "that charity begins at home;" "that it is every person's first and chiefest concern to take care of self;" and a thousand such-like arguments avowed by the small vulgar, but not less practised by the great. I say not, however, that our compassion should be lavished indiscriminately: I only say, that when we behold such an

object as strongly awakens it, we may safely, and ought therefore readily to yield ourselves up to its guidance; nor on account of one or two, or even a thousand instances of misplaced or misapplied benevolence, harden our hearts to a constant disuse of this virtue. Ought we not rather perpetually (for almost perpetual objects of our commiseration present themselves to our view) to give a courteous attention at least to those children of affliction, whom sickness, pain, hunger, or extreme poverty so manifestly have distressed, that they call on our pity either to afford them immediate relief ourselves, or to put them in a way to be relieved by the charitable institutions of their country? Can we find any cause to treat them otherwise till they be proved actual impostors? Will the bare suspicion of imposture authorize our disdain and contumely? Will even actual imposture in them excuse a barbarity of behaviour in ourselves? It is true, that in this case they may deserve to be punished, and it may be our duty to bring them to punishment: But let not private ill-treatment anticipate the severities of public justice: Let not individuals presume summarily to decide where the laws of their country would deliberately inquire; and let that judicial sentence alone be inflicted, which those laws only are competent to inflict.

I am but too well aware that the spirit of those our necessary laws, which, affixing a certain poor's rate for

the relief of miserable individuals, lays it as a parochial tax on the more opulent part of the community, greatly contributes to advance the evil here complained of; and though, perhaps, it be beyond the wisdom of human legislation to apply an effectual remedy, yet, while the evil subsists, it behoves the Christian Preacher to admonish his audience, that the payment of a legal duty, as this is, to the state, by no means absolves them from the practice of that universal benevolence commanded by the Gospel; much less does it vindicate them in treating those unhappy men, who are supported by such public tribute, with insolence and outrage. Certain it is that this succedaneum for private charity (as it is thought to be by many), added to that mock courtesy, already reprobated, which neither springs from nor accompanies compassion, has a lamentable tendency to divest the heart of all its benevolent sensations. Blessed be God, it cannot totally obliterate them, because he has made them a part of our nature; yet, surely, they too frequently weaken their benign efficacy.

Were it necessary to add any thing more in reprobation of that substitute for real courtesy, which I have said so fatally co-operates with that which lessens private charity, I would farther observe, that all the fantastic rules and modes of it are borrowed from a foreign country never famous for its compassion, and which has given a recent instance of the want of it, by endeavouring to deprive a

free nation of almost its only blessing, and at length succeeding in the barbarous attempt:* I would add too, that the fantastic modes thus borrowed, are made still more so by an awkward imitation: what wonder then that humanity and unaffected generosity, which once were the distinguishing virtues of an Englishman, should be seldom seen amongst us; and if seen, unhonoured; nay, perhaps, ridiculed and despised; while those only are deemed patterns of politeness, directors of taste, masters of true breeding, who have transferred into themselves the manners I speak of, yet are at best only imperfect translations of a futile and affected original.

Where shall we find a remedy for this depravation, this corruption of the moral character? Where, but by looking up to better archetypes, and by imitating examples more worthy of our emulation: Shall I, for this purpose, refer you to the sages, the heroes, the citizens of antiquity, who, by making Greece and Rome virtuous, made them also prosperous and happy? Shall I point out to you those patriarchs and prophets of the Jewish nation, which the hand of inspiration has delineated in such striking colours? No—I will rise higher than these! I will hold forth to your contemplation that perfect exemplar of pity, courtesy, and every benevolent affection,

* This was preached (as the annals of the times will show) just after the French had reduced Corsica to their dominion.

the meek, the humble, the suffering Jesus: Jesus, the author of your salvation, the finisher of your faith. Behold then his pity breaking forth in the tears of genuine patriotism, and bewailing those calamities which infidelity and irreligion had brought upon his devoted country. Behold it falling in the dews of genuine tenderness over the grave of Lazarus, his departed friend. Admire that pathetic instance of true courtesy he afterwards gave, when, forgetting the burthen of the cross which he then bore, and on which he was shortly to suffer the most excruciating of torments, he cried out to the women, who lamented him, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." Lastly, revere the divine efficacy of both these virtues united when sublimed into charity, and exerted in the agony of death; they breathed a prayer for his murderers, and fervently exclaimed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Here, then, let us conclude, and silently adore what it would be almost impiety if we attempted to applaud; yet let us strive to imitate, in manner and in kind, virtues which we can never attain to in degree: for we know that he was given for an example that we should follow his steps: Let us then have (as he had towards us) fervent charity one towards another: that charity which our holy Religion assures us never faileth, since it comprehends not only the two virtues which have now been

recommended to your practice, but includes also every tender sentiment that the human mind is constituted to feel, every benevolent action that the human powers have an ability to perform.

ON

CHRISTIAN INDEPENDENCE.

SERMON VII.

1 Cor. vii. 23.

YE ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE; BE NOT YE THE SERVANTS OF MEN.

In the chapter preceding this, it is observable that the Apostle draws another conclusion from the same premises: "Ye are bought," says he, "with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit which are God's." These two passages seem to have a reference to one another; I shall, therefore, have them both in my view in the following discourse. The former propositions, as I have said, are in both arguments the same, and, as addressed to the people of Corinth, allude, with propriety, to the custom common in that city, with the rest of Greece, of dealing in slaves; connected, therefore, together, they will admit the following paraphrase: "God has purchased you with the precious blood of his Son; but the nature of the purchase, the price given, and the dignity of the purchaser are such, that you must not look upon yourselves as bought to serve and obey him in such a manner as might fulfil the duty you owe

to a human master. You must do more than this, you must glorify him; that is, you must improve your moral faculties, and advance them to as high a pitch as your nature is capable of reaching, in order to render yourselves fit servants of such a master, whose sole property you are, by a double title, not only by the right of creation, but redemption. This being the point of view in which you are to look upon yourselves with respect to your Maker, take heed that you do not depreciate yourselves by any mean servility to your fellow-creatures; but in your commerce with the world preserve that spirit of freedom and independence which is your birth-right as men, and which is not lessened but improved by your becoming Christians."

On a presumption that what I have here delivered is a just and consonant explication of the Apostle's meaning, which, according to his usual manner, he has expressed with a nervous conciseness, I hope it will appear from the sequel of this discourse, how incapable any man is of promoting the glory of God, who suffers himself to be drawn into a state of worldly dependence, and who either servilely submits to the unjust commands, or meanly adopts the fashionable views, of those whom fortune only has made his superiors.

For the dependence which I would condemn, and which the Apostle certainly means, when he exhorts his

converts not to become the servants of men, is by no means that natural one which results from our mutual wants, and without which civil society could not subsist; nor yet that unnatural one which mankind have in all ages, from external causes, been obliged to submit to; but that which still more debases human nature, and is more abhorrent to it, which arises from an internal defect in individuals, and that of the worst kind, a defect not of the head but of the heart.

That the Apostle excludes that kind of dependence which arises from external causes in the present case, is clear from the verse immediately preceding the text. "Art thou called, being a servant, care not for it, but if thou may be made free, use it rather." As if he had said, Liberty is indeed such an inestimable blessing, that every man must of necessity prefer it to slavery; yet if thou hast the misfortune to be reduced to that condition, do not, now that thou art become a Christian, repine at thy lot, because it is one of the principal duties of Christianity to be resigned and patient, even in the most calamitous of situations. It is plain, therefore, that this kind of servitude, though an unnatural state, as many glorious defenders of the rights of mankind have irrefragably proved, is not that which the Apostle means; neither can it possibly be that natural state of mutual support and subordination, which is of the very essence of civil society, because, St. Paul, if he could exhort his

convert to be content in a state of absolute slavery, would surely never prompt him to break those easy, those useful bonds which connect him to an equal and equitable government. It is not to be doubted, therefore, but that he confines his meaning to that abject servility which self-interest produces in a bad heart, the offspring of which are all those dishonourable actions that degrade a man below humanity, and are consequently incompatible with that divine dispensation, which was meant to purify his nature, and make him capable even of glorifying his God.

Nevertheless, the man who is mean enough so far to degrade his own dignity, is usually cunning enough to produce passages of misapplied Scripture to justify that meanness; nay, even to change it to a virtue, and to pretend that what unenlightened Reason may deem a despicable blemish, Revealed Religion holds forth to our imitation as a Christian Grace. It is even to be feared that some pious persons have so far deceived themselves in this matter, as to believe that when they acted servilely they only acted humbly, and thought themselves intitled to a beatitude for being poor in spirit, when in fact they were only mean in spirit, and void of honour. Certain it is, that the history of mankind affords us many lamentable instances of this defection from common honesty in the public actions of persons whose private conduct was irreproachable; a defect which I would rather impute to

self-deception than hypocrisy; and indeed in many cases the piety, and even severity of their lives, seems fully to justify that candid imputation.

As, therefore, many estimable characters in other respects have been found deficient in this, it may not be amiss, briefly, to ascertain what Christian Humility is, and how we may be so poor in spirit as to obtain the kingdom of heaven, without descending to that meanness of heart which is only calculated to procure the good things of the world.

If we examine this virtue as it existed not only in our blessed Saviour, but also in his Apostles, and I know of no fairer medium through which to view it, we shall find that its features were bold, open, and even intrepid; that no worldly compliance, no mean adulation, no venal prostitution ever entered into its composition. The lowest estimation of self, the humblest submission to the will of God, the most compassionate condescension to the wants and even weaknesses of mankind, were its engaging characteristics; but these ever accompanied with a supreme contempt of vice and the abettors of vice; a contempt not only inwardly felt, but publicly avowed. Against these they ventured to launch their just indignation, not only in the Synagogue, but even before the Sanhedrim: yet were these men, like their divine Exemplar, meek and lowly of heart; they intimately felt

their own nothingness, they ingenuously confessed it; they knew that they were only unprofitable servants; but they knew too that they were the servants not of men but of God; and that they should be still more unprofitable to the God who had purchased them with so inestimable a price, if they submitted to man, from whom they could only receive the wages of iniquity. In a word, they knew that whoever served Mammon could never serve, much less glorify God. Thus we see that any other humility than that which the founders of our holy faith exercised, was incompatible with the cause they maintained, and contrary to their allegiance to the Captain of their salvation, under whose banners they fought: I would ask if it is not as much so at present? No man will privately think the negative, though he may not chuse publicly to declare his sentiment. He will say, perhaps, that humility, carried to a culpable excess, is by no means the most prevalent fault of the present age; that on the contrary, licentious abuse and libellous ribaldry have spread such a factious spirit amongst the body of the people, that we have greater reason to apprehend danger from seditious practices than servile compliances. It is indeed a confessed and a melancholy truth, that we live in times very similar to those which St. Jude has, with so much energy of expression, described: "We live amongst men who not only defile the flesh, but despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities;" but we live too amongst men who, like the former, "walking after their

own lusts, have men's persons in admiration because of advantage." We see the Apostle gives the origin of both these characters to a depravity of heart; which of them is of the most pernicious consequence to the community, far be it from me to determine. The disquisition were as idle as that which has so often and so vainly exercised the wits of the learned, endeavouring to ascertain whether Atheism or Superstition has the most baneful tendency. All extremes are in their very nature baneful. True virtue ever resides in a medium between both; and like the orb that enlightens the heavens, is then brightest when most distant from that common darkness out of which it rises, and into which it declines.

What this medium is in the present case, the sequel of this discourse shall be employed in describing: I will endeavour to draw the principal outlines of that most glorious, most exalted of characters, that of the sincere Christian who endeavours to glorify his God, while he is the useful, the loyal subject of his Prince; and who, without being the servant of men, is yet a friend to mankind, and an honour to his country.

Convinced by the sacred pages which so frequently inculcate this awful truth, that he has here no continuing city, he makes it his principal business to secure himself a mansion in that which fadeth not away, a house eternal in the heavens; equally convinced that his continuance

here (however short or long its duration) is an important space of time, which ought to be employed in those practical duties which become a moral Agent and a social Being, and that his very hope of happiness hereafter depends upon his practice of those duties here; he does not, like the monastic bigot, seclude himself from society, or refuse to act that part in the world which his sphere of life authorises him to perform. As a child of Light, he walks in the light, yet this without ostentation, and frequently when malice itself cannot suppose him to be ostentatious; for he may live in times when to be singularly good, may, for its very singularity, be the object of general ridicule; when the noblest virtues may be unfashionable and almost opprobrious; nevertheless, he will venture to exercise the most unfashionable of them all, he will even dare to be a patriot: unheated by party rage, despising personal and private emolument, let the torrent of faction or corruption be ever so general, he will still inviolably preserve his loyalty as a subject, his liberty as a man, as a Briton; he will guard the constitution of his country against every assault, both of sedition and seduction; will try to prevent every breach that either enemy may endeavour to make in it; will try to repair those breaches, even when he fears they are irreparable.

Thus will that Christian act whose birth or fortune necessarily leads him to appear in public life; but the

poorer and more private Christian will not act a part less meritorious: he will exert the same virtues; though they cannot shine forth with the same lustre, they will not, therefore, be the less pure, nor perhaps the less useful: for although we have melancholy proof that servility is by no means confined to the lower stations of life, yet we must necessarily expect to find that persons in this class will be the most liable to become servile: and the reason is obvious: Ambition and Faction well know, that without their assistance they can neither of them attain their infamous purposes; how zealous they are to employ them is visible from the base means which they use to procure them; and penury is not perhaps always sufficiently able to resist the powerful temptation. He, therefore, who refuses to be the tool of either, and who resolutely preserves his integrity, be he the poorest peasant, the meanest mechanic, I will be bold to say that he does more than fear, he glorifies his God; he does more than honour, he loves his King; and by doing both, does all in his power to promote the happiness of his country. His example (let not the sneer of riches and pride mock at the word, for a poor man may set an example) will be of the greater importance, as it will be more capable of general imitation. It is not in the power of every person to act heroically, but it is in the power of every person to act honestly; and if the hero himself does not in this emulate the peasant, he may, if he pleases, call himself a hero, his flatterers too may call him so, but impartial posterity will not fail to give him a very different appellation.

But enough has been said to excite your meditation upon a subject on which the limits of this discourse will not suffer me further to enlarge: I trust there is no occasion for it; some vices are of such a kind as barely to mention them is sufficient to make ingenuous minds detest them; and such, surely, are all those which spring from a venality of soul, and tend to enslave us in the sense of St. Paul's precept, when he bids us not to become the servants of men; the mean, the mercenary servants of corrupt masters, who would not, let us assure ourselves, wish for such service, were not they themselves the servants of Sin, nor try to enslave others, were not they themselves already entangled in the yoke of bondage.

ON THE

CHRISTIAN DUTY

OF

GLORIFYING GOD.

IN SEQUEL TO THE FORMER DISCOURSE.

SERMON VIII.

1 Cor. vi. 20.

YE ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE, THEREFORE GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY, AND YOUR SPIRIT, WHICH ARE GOD'S.

In the foregoing discourse I connected this text with another in the same Epistle, in which the learned Apostle draws a different conclusion from the same premises; by a paraphrase of them, taken together, I endeavoured to shew the relation which each of the conclusions had with the other, and how they mutually resulted from those premises; but the limits usually assigned to discourses of this kind would not permit me to enlarge on the two precepts conveyed by these conclusions with equal latitude: I therefore chose to take the negative injunction of the Apostle first under consideration, though it stands last in the arrangement of the Epistle, and shall now discourse on the positive one. My reason for this was, that I considered the duty of glorifying God as a precept more peculiarly belonging to the Christian scheme of morals than the other; which, though founded (as we

have seen) on the greatest of all Christian prineiples, and receiving a superadded importance from that principle, is yet in itself a duty whieh mere morality was sufficient to inculeate, and whieh indeed it had done amongst the best sects of Gentile philosophers. Innumerable instanees of this truth might easily be drawn from the writings of the Stoies in partieular; the contempt in whieh they held the time-serving and dependent person was almost without bounds, yet I believe it would be diffieult to find amongst their dogmas, one whieh prescribes the practiee of virtue for the sake of glorifying God; indeed this practice led them necessarily from their principles only to glorify themselves, and this they did to so great an excess, that their boastings on this head frequently verge on impiety.*

Being therefore authorised, as I think I am, to call this doctrine in the text a divine one, and taught only by Revelation, I have thought proper to reserve it for a later eonsideration, as being a duty of the greatest importance, and from which almost all our other duties as Christians may be deduced; beeause the momentous eonsideration of our being purchased by so inestimable a price as the blood of Christ, ought not only to induee us to be above becoming the servants of men (in the sense I have already explained) but above becoming the servants of sin; or,

* See one instance of this from Seneca, quoted in a note to Sermon II. p. 22.

in other words, to be above the pollutions not only of the world, but of our own natural passions and vicious inclinations.

Indeed it is for this latter purpose that St. Paul, in this place, uses so cogent an argument; but it is observable that he uses a term here not analogous to the other. In that case he says negatively, be ye not the servants of men; but in this he does not say affirmatively, be ye the servants of God; he employs one of a much higher signification, he bids us glorify him. This seems to require an illustration; and I think the best method of giving it will be by a short comparative view of the difference there is between every degree of human servitude, and of that which relates to the service due from man to the Deity; for I conceive, from this essential difference, the duty inculcated in the text arises, and that it was on this account St. Paul used the peculiar term in question.

First, Absolute servitude, amongst individuals, in a state of human society, is merely productive of benefit or advantage to the superior party. The slave reaps nothing from the alliance (if it may be so called) but mere subsistence; and even this subsistence may properly enough be considered as promoting the master's emolument, when we reflect that without it he would not be enabled to answer the end for which his master purchased him, and consequently would to him be a useless purchase.

Secondly, Limited servitude admits of mutual advantages; for here the inferior is supposed to be hired, not bought, and consequently to earn the wages of his labour; in this case, therefore, each party receives mutual benefit, in a degree indeed that cannot be distinctly ascertained, yet, clearly from the nature of the contract, a benefit which is intended to be mutual.

These are evidently the facts in the two only supposeable cases we can put respecting individuals, and what is true in these cases, is also true in the two modes of civil government similar to them. The despotic form is solely calculated for the benefit of the tyrant; the milder and mixed monarchical one produces mutual advantages, as well to the subject as the sovereign; and even the aristocratic or republican modes of government, in which there is no distinct head, but where power and subjection frequently fluctuate, are yet intended in their origin, and are calculated in some degree (if not very ill executed) to promote the common welfare of the whole political body.

In this advantage either to one or both of the parties it is that the specific difference between the service of man to man, and of man to God seems to consist; for we have seen that there is no kind of human government where the benefit accrues solely to the subordinate part, or where those who are governed receive an advantage

exclusive of those who govern: Whereas, in that subordinate relation in which man stands towards his Maker, the benefit accrues entirely to himself, because it is certain that God cannot be benefited of any, even the best of his services; for though mere morality may inculcate the duty of our serving God to the utmost of our power, yet it is manifest, that by thus serving him we only promote the true interest of ourselves. It is clear, that by acting as under the inspection of an all-good Being, we take the surest means of avoiding such vices as have an immediate tendency to injure our own temporal happiness; that the farther we estrange ourselves from the practice of such virtues as natural reason teaches us can only be approved by such a master and inspector, the more we divest ourselves of that internal satisfaction which arises from a well-spent life and a peaceful conscience; and that the more we give the reins to any of our passions, the more we abridge our true liberty, and fall under the worst species of tyranny; in a word, it is clear that to lead a life of innocence is the only means of living a life of happiness.

But an objector, though he admits this to be true, will yet be ready to ask the following very obvious question: "If no service we can render the Deity can possibly "benefit him, how can any thing that we do glorify "him? Are we not as incapable of increasing his glory "as his happiness?" I am, on my own part, ready to

allow, that no satisfactory answer can be made to this objection on the principles of natural religion or mere Deism; but I have said before, that the doctrine in view is purely Christian; that it rests solely on the authority of divine revelation, and is among those peculiar dogmas which unassisted reason neither ever did or could possibly teach, and which, therefore, are only to be found in the writings of inspiration; but in these writings the phrases so frequently occur of giving glory to and of glorifying God, that he must cease to be a Christian who rejects this doctrine from his belief or practice: It is his business, therefore, only to investigate what that doctrine means, and this he can do, so as to obtain a complete notion of it, by comparing the passages in which it is there mentioned with one another. The result of such an inquiry, I apprehend, will be the following conclusion:

That although man, in an absolute sense, be incapable of adding any thing to God's glory, yet, in a limited sense, he is authorized by the whole tenor of divine revelation to presume that he is formed with powers to glorify him, because God has endowed him with moral faculties, which, if fully improved and rightly exerted, may relatively contribute to that perfection of the material universe, which is the work of the Almighty, and which, when he had made it, he declared to be good, and consequently capable of being no inconsiderable

theatre of his glory. In this theatre man is taught that he is appointed to act a part of no small importance, because he is divinely informed that "God made him a little lower than the angels, to crown him with glory and honour;" which two attributes, we may justly conclude, consist in the superiority he has over the inferior part of the creation, or, as the context expresses it, in God's having "given him dominion over the works of his hands, and put all things in subjection under his feet."

If then he is a Being constituted to receive so great a degree of what may be called transmitted glory, he has it surely in his power to reflect it back in some degree on its divine Original.* If a capacity of doing evil, whether natural or acquired, has given him a power of polluting this created system by his vices, a capacity of doing good, under the influence of divine grace, renders him capable of adorning the same system by his virtues, and able not only to lessen the sum of moral evil, but to increase that of moral good; and, if so, to do his part in polishing that now obscured mirror, which God set up to reflect his own purity and holiness, and which we

* It seems to be on this principle that our blessed Saviour himself exhorts his disciples to the practice of public and exemplary virtue: "Let your Light so shine before men that they "may see your good works;" for why? "That they may GLO-"RIFY your Father which is in Heaven."

Mat. chap. v. ver. 16.

may presume, from Scripture, would ever have reflected these attributes brightly, but for the incidental stains with which our fallen nature has sullied it. He who believes that Scripture which teaches him that "man was made in the image of God," will not controvert these positions; and will consequently admit, that in the relative sense here explained, he is capable of performing the duty which the Apostle in this text exhorts him to perform, to glorify God in his body and his spirit, which are God's.

They are God's, says St. Paul: Both the body and spirit of man is his property; and why? because he has purchased them with a price, the inestimable price of his Son's blood. And for what purpose has he purchased them? The context will tell you; to make them the temple of his own Holy Spirit. These, my brethren, you will allow, are reasons of the last, the most stupendous importance; reasons which the sincere Christian takes into his deepest consideration, and on which he uniformly founds his practice. He knows that to serve his God, in any sort, the precepts which he has given him must be punctually observed. But obedience, he knows, would be his duty, if he only served an earthly master: He, therefore, endeavours to make the spirit, by which God dictated those precepts, his own, and so to act as if they originated in his own bosom, making all those actions proceed from choice, not command, and to flow

from that best of motives, as well as most pleasurable of sensations, genuine unadulterated gratitude.

This then is the temper and genius by which the real Christian endeavours to serve his Maker; this is what revelation means when it instructs us to glorify him; that is, to do every thing with that great end only in view, and to assimilate ourselves as much as human infirmity will suffer us to the Divine Nature; to be pure as God is pure, holy as he is holy: pure and holy in the same manner, though we know it is impossible to be holy and pure in the same degree. To consider ourselves as dear unto him, because restored and redeemed by him; which consideration, authorized by this and innumerable other passages of holy Scripture, must be the surest means of securing us from that outward defilement with which the sins of impurity and intemperance affect the body, and that inward one by which the violent and brutish passions debase the soul: but this is not all, it will be a constant, effectual, and active spur to our ambition, that heavenly ambition which stimulates us to proceed from grace to grace, till we attain the exalted summit of Christian perfection.

He who aspires to such an exalted character will have a perfect conviction that he cannot perform this duty of glorifying God, if he ever submits to become the servant of man, in the sense which my former discourse was

employed in explaining; nor will he be less convinced if he suffers his own inordinate passions to get the ascendant over him, which St. Paul in this chapter cautions him to avoid, that he will be equally incapacitated from performing it. He must know and believe, that God dwelleth in him, and that he is the temple of his Holy Spirit, before he can presume that he performs this duty acceptably. These are strong terms, but they are St. Paul's, and they may be understood in a manner divested of all enthusiasm, and as not implying any miraculous inward feeling of the fact (a sensation frequently fallacious, always to be suspected); for to know this truth he has only to know that he has sincerely repented of his sins, and that he stedfastly purposes to avoid them in future. These are acts of the will, previous to any expectation of divine grace, and without which we cannot hope to be endowed with such a blessing; but where this will operates we have full assurance from revelation that the Holy Spirit will co-operate with it, so that we may perfectly know that God dwelleth in us; that we are the temple of the Holy Ghost, and that therefore we are capable of glorifying God in our body and our spirit, which are God's.

ON

CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM.

SERMON IX.

Romans ix. 3.

I COULD WISH THAT MYSELF WERE ACCURSED FROM CHRIST, FOR MY BRETHREN MY KINSMEN ACCORDING TO THE FLESH.

It is difficult, perhaps, to determine precisely what the Apostle here means by the terms, ACCURSED FROM CHRIST; we may, however, be assured that they do not necessarily imply absolute and final reprobation; neither the circumstances of the case, nor the character of the writer require us so to interpret the expression. It is probable that he meant, by thus speaking, to declare he was willing to give up the peculiar and extraordinary privilege conferred upon him, of having been miraculously converted to the Christian faith, and rely on the uncovenanted mercy of the Almighty for a season, if, by such a temporary resignation, all his countrymen might become converts, and be put instantly into possession of those inestimable blessings which, by that conversion, they would be enabled to procure. St. Paul, we know, had been a zealous persecutor of the church of Christ;

and we know too, that when he made this declaration, he was its strenuous defender. In this latter situation, therefore, though he must believe that there was no other name under heaven, save that of Jesus, by which mankind could be saved, it does not follow that he should draw the severe conclusion, which some have done, that those, who, through want of due opportunity of conviction, believed not in his name, should be finally condemned: He knew the mercy of his Maker, and the merits of his Redeemer to be infinite, and might therefore well hope, that if he was at present removed from the state of divine favour, in which he had been by miracle placed, he might afterwards obtain it again by the common means of conviction offered to all men, and be graciously renewed by the same Spirit, less manifestly, indeed, yet not less effectually given, so as in due time to receive the full privileges of Christian adoption.*

* This explanation of the text was given me many years ago, in conversation, by Dr. Warburton, very nearly in the words I have used, and I hope the veneration in which I hold his character, and the honour, which I shall always esteem it, of being ranked amongst his friends, does not mislead me, when I prefer the sense which he thought the right one of this passage. However, to save the reader the trouble of referring to two commentators on this epistle, of great and deserved note, Mr. Locke, and Mr. Taylor of Norwich, I shall here inform them that the former explains it thus: "I wish the destruction and extermi-"nation to which my brethren are devoted by Christ, might be "executed on me;" and the latter thus, "I could even wish "that the exclusion from the visible Church of Christ, which "will happen to the Jewish nation, might fall to my share."

It is in this milder and chastised sense, that I would chuse to understand this wish of the Apostle: thus understood, though his zeal may appear less passionately fervent, yet it still breathes the highest degree of social affection, disinterested benevolence, and, let me add, of genuine Patriotism, on which account I have selected it as the theme of my present discourse. But before I enter upon the subject, I would observe, to the honour of our holy religion, that the text before us is one amongst many others that might be produced in confutation of a very ordinary objection which Infidelity brings against the Christian system of morality, pretending it to be defective, because some of the social virtues, such as friendship, public spirit, love of our country, and the like, are not found particularly inculcated in any of the apostolical writings. We may allow the Infidel safely enough, that the identical terms are not to be found there; but yet we assert that he must be as blind as he is captious, if he cannot perceive that the spirit of the virtues themselves breathes in every page of them, with the most exemplary and affecting fervency;* and did no

Many other explanations of this expression are to be found in theological writers, but in whatsoever way it either has been, or can be interpreted, it is clear that St. Paul was willing to undergo a very great calamity for the benefit of his countrymen, and therefore the text is certainly a good foundation to rest that duty upon, which it is the business of this discourse to recommend and inculcate.

* The objection with respect to friendship, has been most

part of their writings remain, except the noble description of Christian Charity, which St. Paul gave to the Corinthians, he must own that in this alone, which is the very bond of moral perfection, they are all comprehended.

Having premised this, I proceed rather to describe than define the duty in question.

By Patriotism or public spirit, I mean that active and fervent passion to promote the real welfare of our country, which, superior to all the narrow and mistaken views of self-interest, superior to the call of party, or even of private friendship, prompts a man strenuously to support those measures, and those alone, which his maturest reason convinces him are most likely to be of service to it, and as resolutely to oppose whatever may tend to its disadvantage. Yet active and fervent as I have called this passion, I ever suppose it to be under the control of right and of justice, for I cannot admit the boldest claim of heroism itself to come under this predicament, when it exerts itself in a false cause, and has not a principle superior to personal courage to excite its action. But, when guided by this, and when the prosperity of the community clearly demands it, it cannot exert itself too

ably and elegantly refuted by Dr. Porteus, Bishop of Chester, in his 18th Sermon: and this without depreciating the duty, but giving it its due place and importance in the moral scale.

strongly, not even when, ready to pay the sacrifice of ...aries; best blood, it marches undismayed to the very gate ...nate death. And, by rating this virtue so high, I certainly do not over-rate it, since we have seen by the text, that the Apostle was willing to risk advantages infinitely superior to temporal existence, if by such means he might procure for his rejected countrymen the certain assurance of eternal salvation.

We have, therefore, all reason possible to affirm, that the virtue thus understood, is a part, and a principal one too, of the general duty of a Christian, as the love of our country, by necessarily including all the relative affections of domestic life, carries us the very next step to universal benevolence. The heathen moralist, indeed, thought, that it solely comprehended the entire system of social duties; but where shall we find the precept of the love of all men, or perfect philanthropy cogently inculcated, without having recourse to the sacred code of Revelation?

Yet how high soever this duty may be placed, either on a moral or Christian scale, it is a certain and melancholy truth, that it was never less cultivated in this country than by the present age, and in no other ever made the subject of so much indiscreet and indecent ridicule. Many causes may have contributed to this, too many indeed to be here enumerated, and some of a kind

part[illegible]mpatible with that cautious reserve imposed by long tion[illegible]ription on the English preacher.* Yet there are [illegible]wo which, if duly adverted to, will fully account for the inauspicious phænomenon.

I. The first is that gigantic spectre of PRODIGALITY, which to a political eye, purged from every film of party and prejudice, is the very harbinger of national destruction. But I leave this vice, in a public sense of the term, to be ascertained and reprobated by persons in public life, and skilled in the mysteries of public finance. Any private observer, like myself, is, however, competent to mark the excess, to which, in the course of a very few years, it has been carried by our once-opulent individuals, and every new day teems with new instances to prove its increasing prevalency, and to show the havock it has made in some of the wealthiest, the noblest, and, until blasted by its malign influence, the most honourable families in the kingdom. To give this vice the name of luxury would be dignifying it with too respectable a title; for luxury, prejudicial as it is in the end to a state, frequently connects itself with taste and elegance, fosters the arts, and sometimes patronizes science; but Prodigality is ever the blind dupe of capricious Fashion. Let Fashion then give the word, and to

* It is a curious problem, and of difficult solution, "why the "French and English pulpits have for more than a century dif-"fered so much in this point."

what excesses can she not lead her deluded votaries; even in a single hour of midnight gaming, to dissipate that fortune which the laudable frugality of many an ancestor had combined to accumulate, who in the mean time had past through life with hospitality and splendor. What is the dreadful event of this ill-fated hour? A whole succeeding life either of servile dependency, or vain despondency; for such a prodigal, though, with respect to his inutility, he may resemble his brother in the Gospel, and *cannot dig*, yet he comes often beneath him in point of spirit, *to beg he is* NOT *ashamed.*

But it may be urged that Prodigality is not always accompanied by a love of play, and when either it is, or is not, it will not follow that the public spirit of the individual must necessarily be diminished by it.—To this objection I have already answered in part, by shewing that a shattered fortune naturally induces dependency; and I need only add, that if it is not very probable that a person unpossessed of what he thinks a competency, should be able to exhibit any extensive degree of this virtue, it is still less to be expected from the man who has reduced a splendid fortune to that very moderate pittance, which, when compared with what he originally possessed and expended, must appear to him a state of indigence. Hence those eternal intrigues and solicitations for pensions and places, and that aim for being supported by a public he has rendered himself unable to

support. But, when gaming is taken into the account, I am bold to affirm that this vice is, of all others, the most repugnant to the virtue in question: It has both its immediate origin and end in absolute selfishness; for what other motive can I have for risking a considerable part of my fortune on the chance of a die, against either an equal or unequal part of that of any other, but the mean wish of gaining his property by his ill success in the fortuitous contest. Is it, or can it be imagined, that he who habitually aims to obtain, under the auspices of a lucky moment, that which, when obtained, will tend to make its loser miserable, is possessed of any genuine philanthropy, or, if he had any sparks of it originally, that he will not by the infamous practice soon totally extinguish them?*

* It is said that those who play for the enormous sums to which I allude, do it, not from a selfish motive, but only on account of the inexpressible pleasure they feel by having their passions strongly agitated. What the pleasure is that requires such strong agitation, I am happily a stranger to, and cannot therefore controvert a sensation which I never felt; but I cannot help suspecting it to be a species of exstacy which they hold in common with the highwayman about to rob a coach; his sensations, methinks, must be the more exquisite of the two, because he risks the more on his success. The other, by only putting his fortune instead of life to the hazard, can be supposed to feel but an inferior agitation of spirits, yet great enough, perhaps, if he loses, to stimulate him afterwards to experience the still superior gratification I have mentioned, of which, in lower life than that to which I am now alluding, instances are by no means unfrequent.

But to return to Prodigality, of which this vice, we will allow, is but occasionally a concomitant. It may surely be affirmed that in proportion as it abridges the affluence of an individual, it must tend to abridge his means of being serviceable to the community in every point where a free and independent spirit is requisite for that service; to act for it in a subaltern way then is the utmost he can hope to do, even with the most generous and public spirited intentions; and on the many additional temptations he will have in such circumstances to act for self alone, it is not necessary further to insist.

II. I proceed now to touch upon that second topic, which I have said is another capital cause of this virtue's being less cultivated at present than, in a state like ours, the welfare of it undoubtedly requires; and this is the pernicious fashion, increased of late to an extreme degree, of sending our youth so very early, and also so very generally, on FOREIGN TRAVEL. Formerly this was thought a necessary ingredient only in the education of our principal nobility, or most antient and honourable families; now it is extended to the youths of the most moderate pretensions, either as to birth or fortune. The consequences of this folly are every day more and more apparent amongst us,* for, from these premature pere-

* See many of these acutely remarked upon, under the personated character of Mr. Locke, in two most masterly and eloquent dialogues of Dr. Hurd, the present Bishop of Worcester,

grinations a habit of thinking and of acting is acquired, of all others the most abhorrent to the genius of our free constitution, for they see, in the despotic governments through which they pass, and especially in that frivolous nation where they principally sojourn, that between the gentlemen and the peasant there is no respectable medium; they therefore (as extreme youth is apt to do) rashly conclude that there ought not to be any medium whatever, and therefore that the men of commerce and the substantial yeomanry, who constitute the very sinews of the state, should be severed from it, as merely trou blesome excrescences. Hence they are apt to treat them with contemptuous behaviour, and to forget that respect, which, in due degree, man owes to man, and which no elevation of birth, no distinction of title, no talents, either natural or acquired, ought to exempt any Englishman from paying to his fellow-citizen. But this evil goes still further, it gives them a secret predilection for those modes of arbitrary government which they have found would emancipate them from the fatigue of courting popularity, and which, according to the refinement of their notions, and that careless inattention which constitutes their politeness, might seem to level them too

amongst which, that pernicious consequence, here noticed, is somewhat glanced at, *p.* 89 *and* 149. *Moral and Political Dialogues*, *Vol.* 3*d. Ed.* III. To have done more than hint at it would have appeared to be a kind of anachronism, and have injured the *costume* of the piece, because in the time of Mr. Locke, the continent was not so universally visited as it has been of late years.

much with the vulgar, and debase their urbanity. This fixes them in an opinion, which many of them would at a proper opportunity perhaps not scruple to avow, that it is better to rise to distinction and consequence at the decisive nod of a despotic prince, than by the united suffrages of a free people.

Before I conclude, I would aim to obviate one very general excuse, which many men of the best moral and religious principles are apt to make for the neglect of this duty, and for the unwillingness they have to exert their talents in their country's service, when any emergency calls for such exertion. On such an occasion, with a sigh and a look, in which it is difficult to ascertain whether pity or contempt predominates, they say, "that the whole body of the people are now become so "abominably corrupt, that this wretched country ex- "hibits so many of those symptoms of a rapid decay "which have appeared in other great states as harbin- "gers of their dissolution, that to hope to stem that "torrent of vice, which must so soon inevitably over- "whelm us, would be an attempt as rash to engage in, "as difficult to accomplish. All therefore that reason "and common sense dictate to them is to sit quiet, each "man under his own vine, or under his own fig-tree, "and, if the one does not cease to blossom and the "other to give its increase while he remains tenant of "their shade, it is all that he has to wish for, and more "than he has reason to hope."

To persons of this turn of thinking I would only take the freedom to set before them the example of the great Apostle, from whom I have borrowed my text, and beg leave to ask them whether the present state of Englishmen, bad as I allow it to be, can be conceived worse than that of the Jews, when he breathed this patriotic wish for that nation. To that profligacy which their own historian * has acknowledged and even painted in the blackest colours, he was a witness, and his own experience then shewed him with what acrimony they persecuted the disciples, and reprobated the doctrine of that divine teacher, whom, about twenty years before, they had ignominiously crucified: the Spirit of prophecy had also assured him that their fate was determined, and that for this and their other blasphemies and crimes, they would soon be nationally exterminated. Yet, notwithstanding this; notwithstanding he had been peculiarly appointed by Heaven, not their Apostle, but that of the Gentiles, he still could never forget that they were his countrymen, or conquer "that heaviness, that "continual sorrow in his heart" "for his brethren, his "kinsmen in the flesh;" nor could he ever remit his zeal for both their temporal and eternal welfare, by endeavouring to convince them of their errors, and restore them to the divine favour.

When the persons I am now speaking to have well weighed all this, when they have duly contemplated

* Josephus.

St. Paul's character in this amiable, this affecting light, I should hope they would be convinced, that to despair of the public weal, even under the most unfavourable circumstances, is not only a pusillanimous, but an unchristian disposition, and that the apathy and supineness which they dignify with the name of prudence, argues a want of one of the noblest, as well as most beneficent sensations that can actuate the human soul.

ON

CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE.

SERMON X.

Romans xiii. 8.

OWE NO MAN ANY THING, BUT TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

THERE is no passage in Holy Scripture (though no book abounds with more passages of the kind) in which the duty of benevolence and love of our neighbour is put in a stronger light, and recommended to our practice on more rational grounds, than in this short but comprehensive sentence. Suffer me to attempt an explanation of its full meaning: it will require a pretty long paraphrase to explain it compleatly, but the inferences deducible from it are of so great importance to our well-being, both here and hereafter, that I trust the present time cannot be better employed than in enlarging upon it.

My brethren, says St. Paul to his converts the Romans, and what he delivered to them is equally applicable to every Christian society at this day, be strict observers of the rule of right in all your dealings, which you cannot be, if you strive by unnecessary delays, or any more sinister arts, to hinder any person whatever from receiving

those dues which, either by the laws of your country, by private compact, or on account of obligations received, he is authorised to require at your hands.

Your civil rulers require of you certain taxes, tribute, or customs, by the receipt of which they are enabled to answer the demands and support the dignity of government, and by that means secure to you those great national blessings of liberty and peace.

Your ecclesiastical teachers, according to their legal establishment, are authorised, in like manner, to require of you a certain proportion of the produce of your lands, by your due payment of which they may be capable of leading that life of learned leisure, which may qualify them to give you good spiritual instruction, to preserve you from heresy and error, and to ground you in those right principles of religion, which make your prayers and praises to God a fit and reasonable service.

You require of one another, by those particular agreements which the laws of your country give you a right of making, certain rates and contributions for various necessary purposes. By the regular discharging of which the welfare of your separate community is promoted, and the comforts and conveniencies of life are increased.

Whatever therefore is required of you, for all or any of

these good ends, if it be demanded equitably, pay it freely, and by this means acquit yourselves of that part of your duty which, as subjects or as citizens, you owe to your country.

As private persons, in your mutual traffic and negociations with one another, it will necessarily happen that, whatever your stations or situations in life are, you must incur debts, and stand accountable to one another for certain goods and commodities received, for labour done, or for money borrowed. The common course of the world, and the very nature of society make this necessary. When St. Paul therefore directs you to owe no man any thing, he cannot be supposed to mean this in a strict and absolute signification. No certainly; he only means, that you are not to incur debts wantonly, nor keep in debt needlessly. That you are not to borrow, when you have neither intention nor ability to repay, and that you are always to repay whenever the exigencies, or even the inclination of the lender demands a restitution. This is his meaning, and all that a cool and rational interpretation can deduce from the expression.

But there is one debt, my brethren, which the Apostle tells you, that you can never discharge. You must always be paying it, and yet still continue as much in debt as ever. No independent, opulent, or exalted situation in life can, or ought, to prevent you from being as deeply in

debt in this point, as the poorest and most necessitous of your fellow-creatures. No commutation, no substitution or mode of exchange, can excuse you from being responsible in person in this point, and from being ready to pay it on any, on every occasion where it is demanded, nay even where it is not demanded; neither is it the hope of being repaid that must prompt you to lend in this case; you must lend, even where this return is not to be hoped for. Do I keep you in suspence? No: you are all aware that this debt is the debt of Christian love: that debt of good-will and benevolence which you owe to your neighbour; that debt which St. Paul means when he bids you "owe "no man any thing but to love one another:" when he tells you that "love worketh no ill to his neighbour," and that "love is the fulfilling of the law."

This then being the full and compleat meaning of the text, let us examine into the reasons on which it is founded, and why this exertion of Christian love is a debt of that kind, which can never be paid so fully as to absolve us from any further payment of it; but must be always owing, though we are constantly employed in discharging it.

The first reason is founded on the relation in which we stand to Almighty God. The innumerable benefits which we daily and hourly receive at his hands demand the constant tribute of our love, affection, and gratitude; but

we have no way of expressing this love, affection, and gratitude, so effectually as by acts of kindness and beneficence to our fellow-creatures: and in confirmation of this truth we have the express declaration of St. John, who says, that "If a man say he loveth God and hateth "his own brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his "brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God "whom he hath not seen?" He concludes, therefore, that this commandment comes immediately from God, that whoso loveth him should love his brother also. Now, if we conceive that we can ever repay our Maker sufficiently for all his mercies to us, we say in effect that this love which we owe to him may cease; than which there surely cannot be a more impious assertion. But if we ought constantly to express this love towards him, we ought constantly to express it towards our brethren, because it is his commandment that divine and human love should constantly go together, and his declaration that one cannot exist or be acceptable in his sight without the other.

The force of the next reason depends on the frame and constitution of human nature, which is so replete with wants and weaknesses, consisting indeed of various kinds, yet distributed in pretty equal proportion among the species, that it is, morally speaking, impossible for us to be independent one of another. The community in which we happen to be born gives us laws to obey, duties

and stations to fulfil; and however high our rank may be, dependence in some sort is annexed to it, insomuch that even He who is vested with sovereign power must acknowledge himself protected by, and consequently dependent upon, those very laws which it is his office to dispense. Besides this; intellectual talents and bodily strength are distributed so differently by Providence amongst mankind, that they seldom if ever exist together perfectly in the same person, and the methods by which they are respectively improved are so opposite, that it is hardly possible they should ever unite together in any extraordinary degree. Thus the man who improves his reasoning faculties by hard study and application to his books, generally weakens his nerves and impairs his strength by his sedentary habits; and the man who keeps his bodily vigour and health in perfection by a laborious and active way of life, having seldom either opportunity or inclination to improve his understanding, is usually as deficient in matters which require a thinking head, as the other is in those which require an unwearied arm. Both, therefore, have occasion constantly to apply, each to the other, for assistance: and if brotherly love be cold, and refuse that assistance, they must both sit down dissatisfied and unhappy, for they are equally imperfect beings, and can neither of them do separately that which, when united, they might effect, with mutual ease, satisfaction, and pleasure, by a combination of understanding and strength.

The last reason consists in the very nature of the principle itself, and of those intrinsic properties, without which it ceases to be the thing which we mean by the terms we use to define it.

Now, were benevolence a passive principle that contented itself with being, what the word imports, only a well-wishing, not a well-doing quality, it might not be required to be in constant use and exertion. But when used to denote Christian Love and Charity, and to have the same meaning with these terms, it implies a strenuous and unwearied exercise of one of the most active faculties of the human soul, which is better, perhaps, expressed by the term Beneficence; and for this we have the authority of St. Paul, when he describes charity as never failing, but constantly exerting itself, in bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, and enduring all things. Our charity must therefore be commensurate with our life; it must act so long as we act, for if it ever faileth, it ceaseth to be charity, because we see that the Apostle tells us, it is one of its essential properties never to fail or cease from acting.

On these three reasons, therefore, deduced from our relation to God, the frame and constitution of our nature, and the definition of the virtue itself, we build this important conclusion, that the debt of Charity or Benevolence to our neighbour is a debt which we must take

all opportunities of paying him, and of which we must, only close the payment when death closes our eyes. Then, and then only, can we be said to have paid him fully what we owe him; till then the current account of our Benevolence, to use the mercantile phrase, I trust not improperly, must be kept open; for in this commerce and negociation of Christian Love, the debtor and the creditor perpetually change places, or rather they are both constantly debtors, since both of them equally owe a debt they in this world can never discharge. It is at the general audit on the last day that this account will be finally and impartially stated. It will then be seen who has regarded this precept of St. Paul, and who has not: who has been punctual in paying not only his debts of honour and of justice, but of charity and of love, and who, neglecting to pay both, has died insolvent, not from a defect in his purse, but a defect in his heart; not from a want of œconomy, but from a want of humanity; died owing every thing, even the love which he oweth to his neighbour. Dreadful catastrophe! but let us turn our contemplations from it. Let us revert to the former of these characters, and picture in our imagination (inadequate as the sublimest exertions of that faculty are to the purpose) the glorious state of that just man made perfect, and to the perfection of whose spirit we are sure the benevolence he practised in this life must have so amply contributed; of that just man who, not content, during his state of probation here, to regu-

late his actions by the precise bounds of right and equity, which the rules of mere morality have prescribed, had stept beyond them, and followed this more enlarged notion of Christian justice, which considers Benevolence as a constant debt, and charity as an unceasing obligation; of that just man who has let his head and his heart go together in the strenuous exercise of this duty of Christian love; nay, who has suffered his heart to take the lead; and, warmed with the full fervors of pious zeal, has considered it as that immense debt of endless gratitude* which he owes to his Maker. Of such a man what must be the beatified state? May we not assure ourselves that a soul actuated by so divine a principle here on earth, must, of all other beings, be best prepared to participate the joys of heaven? Are we not certain that the habitual exertions of those virtues which soften the calamities of mortality are the surest qualification for enjoying the blessings of immortality? What those blessings are Revelation has not specifically defined; but we have all possible reason to conclude that whatever promotes our truest happiness in the present state

* The expression is taken from Milton, Par. Lost, Book iv. l. 57, where describing the specific properties of such heavenly gratitude, the sublime Poet uses the following terms:

A grateful mind
By owing owes not, but still pays, at once
Indebted and discharg'd.

beautifully intimating that the very act of payment remunerates him that performs it.

of things, cannot be of a nature either foreign or discordant from that which will constitute our happiness in future. If, therefore, gratitude to our Maker and love to our fellow-creatures, acting reciprocally in the same bosom, and uniting there together to produce the divine fruits of unfeigned piety and disinterested Benevolence, are attended with the most pleasurable sensations in our present state of existence, we may be perfectly convinced that the same sensations, elevated and sublimed to a degree of rapture far beyond our loftiest conceptions, will be experienced by the truly righteous in the sight of that God who, as St. John emphatically describes him, is himself LOVE.

ON THE

PROGRESSIVE ASSISTANCE

OF THE

HOLY SPIRIT.

SERMON XI.

2 Peter iii. 18.

—— GROW IN GRACE.

THE word Grace has various meanings in the New Testament, which not being sufficiently attended to, and ascertained, have occasioned, and still continue to occasion, much altercation, and are the cause of several gross and fundamental errors, both in theory and practice. Sometimes it means a gift or favour, which Almighty God gives to man out of his pure liberality, and which man on his part has done nothing to merit; thus, when by creation he gave us existence, and when by redemption he restored to us our forfeited immortality, both these gifts were, and are properly denominated, the Grace of God.

In other places it means spiritual gifts, communicated miraculously to particular persons for some great and important purpose; thus various graces were given to the Apostles, as the gift of tongues, the gift of healing, and the like, in order to enable them the more successfully

to execute their mission, and propagate the divine truths of the Gospel.

Grace is also very frequently put to signify that inward assistance which the Holy Spirit of God communicates to the sincere believer of his Son, in all times and places, enlightening his understanding, rectifying his will, and becoming that comforter to his soul which was promised by Christ to be sent to the faithful, after he was withdrawn from them, and to continue its salutary operations to the end of the world.

The last sense of the word GRACE which I shall mention, and which seems to be the meaning of the Apostle in the text before us, is the practice of Christian virtue, or our improvement in holiness; for at the very conclusion of his Epistle, as his last and most important exhortation, as a recapitulation of all that he had said before, he calls upon his Converts to grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; as if he had said, endeavour, my Brethren, to improve yourselves in all those good qualities which become your Christian profession; make yourselves acquainted with the life, actions, and character of your blessed Master and Saviour; and endeavour, as far as in you lies, to imitate the perfections of Him, your great Exemplar, who was given unto you as a pattern, that you might follow his steps.

But here it must be carefully observed, that when the word Grace is put, as it is here, for Christian Virtue, it always includes the former signification of the word, and implies also the assistance of God's Holy Spirit to make that virtue acceptable, or in any sort efficacious. It is a fundamental article in the creed of a sincere Christian, that he can do nothing himself as of himself; but that his sufficiency is from God. It is this only that can secure him from spiritual pride and self-presumption. Moral Virtue, as practised in the heathen world, always produced one or both of these bad qualities. The arrogancy of the Stoics (though undoubtedly the best Moralists among the various sects of Gentile philosophy) is even proverbial, and the reason is evident; supposing, as they did, that the human mind was of itself capable of attaining to the very height of moral perfection, they would naturally take the merit of every moral action entirely to themselves, and in consequence become the more vain in proportion as they were the more virtuous. It is God that worketh in me to will and to do of his good pleasure, says the humble spirit of the disciple of Christ; when I have done my best, my very best, without his assistance I am an unprofitable, I am worse, I am a presumptuous servant. How different, how very different this language from that of philosophy and vain deceit: how much more becoming the mouth of fallible man!

We must therefore understand the word Grace in the

text to be the end of which the assistance of the Holy Ghost is the means, namely, that perfection of holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

But it must be again carefully observed that no instantaneously miraculous assistance is here meant, nothing similar to the visible communication of the Spirit as it fell upon the immediate Disciples of Christ on the day of Pentecost: for that miracle was wrought for a great and peculiar purpose; and ceased accordingly when the occasion for it ceased, that is, when the Gospel was so sufficiently promulged that natural means were adequate to its farther propagation. But if this kind of Grace were here meant, the Apostle would not exhort us to grow in it, but would rather have advised us passively to pray for it, because the term *grow*, as imperatively used in this place, necessarily implies some effort of our own, which effort, though it will indeed prove ineffectual without the Divine aid, yet appears necessary to be made on our part, in order that God, on his part, may be graciously pleased to afford us that assistance; and this, as I have said, plainly appears from the very word which St. Peter uses on this occasion: for *to grow*, when the term is applied to any thing which relates to the operations of our minds, becomes a figurative and metaphorical expression, and therefore can only be understood by referring it to its original, primary, and natural meaning. The growth, for instance, of our own bodies, or any other corporeal

substance, capable of increase and extention, we all know is a gradual and progressive property, which, though governed by different laws in different material substances, is yet in all of them a work of some certain time, and limited to some certain dimensions. To consider our own bodies, we know that several years elapse between infancy and manhood, during which our frame proceeds to its limited bulk by gradual and imperceptible intervals. In like manner the improvement of our mental faculty (which metaphorically we call its growth) has its time for accomplishment, and proceeds through the several degrees of education even more gradually than our persons do to their full stature, insomuch that the body has for some years attained to its utmost size before the understanding can be said to have reached its proper standard; indeed the understanding, if duly cultivated, and not impaired by any external accident or bodily distemper, can scarce be said to have any limit or boundary short of its existence, unless indeed the infirmities of old age, which may be rather considered as bodily maladies, are taken into the consideration. This then being the case, I would ask why are we to expect that our growth in moral or Christian perfection should be more quick and sudden than in bodily or mental improvement? We infer immediately from the text, that Grace is a quality which increases; why then should we not believe that it is a quality which increases (as the analogy we have pointed out leads us to do) not suddenly,

but by just gradations; not instantaneously, but by a regular and rational progression? For this opinion we have the authority of various passages of Scripture besides that of the text; for the contrary, we have only the unsupported assertions of a tribe of hot-brained Enthusiasts.

The first passage which I shall quote in proof of the doctrine which I here deliver, is taken from St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, where, after enumerating the various benefits conferred by Christ upon his Church, such as sending unto them Evangelists, Prophets, Apostles, and Pastors, he declares the gracious end to be this, "that they may all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Here we see the metaphor which he uses is exactly the same with that which we have explained, namely bodily growth, "the measure of the stature and full dimensions of Christ," which he justly considers as the highest degree of intellectual perfection, and plainly tells us how we are to arrive at through the medium and different gradations of faith and knowledge; which clearly intimates that St. Paul understood this arrival to the growth, stature, and fulness of Christ to be a work of time and gradual progressive improvement. Another text directly apposite to our present purpose is that well known climax of St. Peter, in which he gives us, link by link, that

chain of successively dependent moral qualifications which the Christian ought to join to his faith, in order to arrive at the perfection of holiness: "Add," says he, "to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity; for (continues he) if these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; therefore give diligence to make your calling and election sure." On this passage I will only make the following remark; that it is plain, since the Apostle thus exhorts us to add one virtue after another (as here specified) in order that we may not be barren or unfruitful in revealed knowledge; and since he admonishes us to give diligence to make our election sure, he certainly means that Christian perfection has this in common with human science, that we must apply ourselves to the study, and habituate ourselves to the practice of it, if we would become real proficients in it, taking moral virtue, as St. Paul speaks of the law, to be our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ: If we do this with diligence, constancy, and perseverance, it is then, and then only, that we can hope for the assisting grace of God; it is then only that his Holy Spirit will help our infirmities, not by over-powering our own natural faculties, not by destroying and over-ruling the freedom

of our will; but by co-operating with our endeavours, and furnishing us with convenient and effectual aids for our farther improvement. Thus St. Paul tells us the Manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal, which, though spoken by him of the external and miraculous Manifestation of the Spirit communicated to the first Christians, is yet no less true of that general yet unseen operation of the same Spirit, which still strengthens the faith, perfects the good works of every sincere follower of Jesus, and is equally to him the Paraclete, the Comforter of his soul, the insurer of his salvation, as he was to those immediate disciples of Christ on whom he visibly descended.

And now if I have justly, and according to the true tenor of Scripture, explained the meaning of the text, it will behove such of my audience, as are convinced of the truth of my explication, to show that they are so by a conformity of belief and practice in the following particulars:

First, then, they will not wait in an ill-grounded expectation till an instantaneous illumination of the Holy Ghost, in a sensible and miraculous manner, operates upon their souls to reform and regenerate them, as some persons pretend they have experienced; but, on the contrary, they will endeavour strenuously, by avoiding all appearance of evil, and by practising every thing that

is praise-worthy and of good report, to make their bosoms a fit receptacle for that best and purest of all inhabitants, who only can fit them for an admission into those blessed mansions where nothing that defileth can enter.

Secondly, They will not despair if, in the course of these virtuous endeavours and sincere pursuits of moral improvement, they should be impeded, by the manifold surrounding temptations, from running the race set before them; but, in case of any lapse, will, by sincere repentance, (and its sincerity can only be shewn by immediate reformation,) endeavour to atone for what they have done amiss, and make their present remorse for their crime a safeguard against their committing it in future.

Thirdly, They will be frequent in imploring the divine Mercy to send them that heavenly Comforter whom he has promised to send to the faithful in all ages of the world, that is to all possessed of that true Christian humility, which feels and owns the want of his assistance; yet will they ever accompany these prayers and supplications with a zealous, diligent, and unceasing endeavour to discharge those very duties for which they implore the assistance of the Divine Power, being assured that if they do not on their own part constantly strive to work out their own salvation, the grace of God, or, in other words, the operation of his

Spirit, will not be superadded to make their less strenuous endeavours effectual; and for this plain reason, because they have not striven to carry them so far as it was in their own natural power to carry them.

Lastly, They will resolve to grow in grace from the present moment. They will not continue in sin that grace may abound; God forbid that they should: but, convinced from the passages of Scripture here adduced, that the influence of the Holy Spirit proceeds progressively and gradually, keeping pace with their own moral endeavours, they will not delay those endeavours, not even for a moment. They will never flatter themselves that if, on any future day, they shall determine to commence a temporary course of mental abstraction, accompanied by severe acts of external contrition, abstinence, and mortification, this grace will be shed upon them in so abundant a manner as to occasion a total change in their tempers, inclinations, and passions. On the contrary, knowing how intimate a connection there is between the mind and the body, they will be wisely cautious of making any extreme experiments on the latter, lest, by so doing, they should irreparably injure the former. They will be fearful (and both the past and present history of Enthusiasm will give them too good cause to be so) that such corporeal exertions and severity may, while they produce an imaginary regeneration in the fancy, occasion a real degeneracy of the understanding. And,

finally, being fully convinced that the service which their God requires from them is a reasonable service, they will take the greatest care possible to keep the light of Reason, which that God has given them, clear and undisturbed, that so the light of his Holy Spirit may mingle its divine flame with it, and produce every salutary effect which the Scriptures, rightly understood, have promised to the true Believer, as the fruits of its blessed illumination.

ON THE

EFFECTS

OF THE

DIVINE SPIRIT.

IN SEQUEL TO THE FORMER DISCOURSE.

SERMON XII.

Rom. xv. 13.

NOW THE GOD OF HOPE FILL YOU WITH ALL JOY AND PEACE IN BELIEVING, THAT YOU MAY ABOUND IN HOPE THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST.

In the preceding discourse I endeavoured to prove, from scriptural authority, that, by gradual and progressive steps only, the Christian is to expect that divine assistance, which, in numberless passages of the sacred writings, is denominated *grace*, and, in others, the operation of the Holy Spirit; in the present, I shall attempt to show what are the first and principal effects of this blessed communication from above upon the mind of that believing individual, to whom the mercy of the Almighty is pleased to impart it.

But, before I do this, I think it necessary to enlarge somewhat upon the causes for which this assistance from on high was originally given, and on those also for which it has since been continued to the faithful through every succeeding age of the Gospel dispensation.

Upon the primary or original cause, it is needless here much to insist: all my audience, I take it for granted, sufficiently understand from the writings of the Evangelists, that this instance of divine benevolence was manifested, on the day of Pentecost, to the disciples of our blessed Lord, in a miraculous and visible manner, very soon after his ascension, and this for the purpose of illuminating their minds with the fulness of revealed knowledge, and inspiring their tongues with all the powers of different languages, in order that they might be enabled to propagate the Christian Faith, not only more expeditiously, but also more universally, and to fix it on that permanent basis, of external and internal evidence, on which it now stands, and by which it is enabled to rise triumphant against the united attacks of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

But on the second cause, on that less visible, yet not less certain, communication of the same blessed Spirit, which continues to be imparted to all sincere Christians, and which co-operates with their own strenuous endeavours to perfect them in holiness, I shall take the liberty to be more particular, and, by examining what human nature is, shall try to explain why this supernatural assistance becomes for that great purpose necessary to it; and hence by an easy consequence, deduce the reason why it was promised, and wherefore it continues to be communicated.

Man is generally defined to be a rational and free agent, and were this definition compleat, did nothing but freedom of will and rectitude of reason predominate in his composition, there is no doubt but that the intrinsic beauty of virtue, added to its apparent utility, would induce him uniformly to act according to the precise rules of moral rectitude; for his reason would sufficiently point out to him what these rules are, and his freedom of will would invariably prevent any hesitation in his inclination to observe them. But he has passions also which demand gratification; passions which, so far from being subservient to his reason, are frequently beyond its control, and almost always in opposition to its dictates. This the sacred Author of the Christian system of morals knew full well, and adapted his divine plan accordingly. He was perfectly aware that neither the abstract fitness of things, the innate sense of right and wrong, nor even the will of God itself, would be, to creatures thus compounded of passion as well as reason, of sufficient obligation to secure their obedience. He had therefore recourse to a variety of other motives, which collectively might have force adequate to his beneficent end; might restore them to their Maker's favor; and, by his own superadded merits, render them worthy heirs of eternal salvation. What these motives were I shall, with all possible brevity, enumerate.

First, Our gracious Redeemer was pleased to confirm

the truth of his mission by a series of great, and, to us, well-attested miracles; all of which, by their beneficial tendency, were calculated to convince mankind that he was a teacher sent from God, and sent on the most benign and affectionate errand.

Secondly, He delivered to them a system of morality infinitely more perfect than any with which the world had been before acquainted, and this he inforced by the purity of his own practice, leaving us at once a rule and a consonant example that we should, by both, be enabled to conform to his will.

Having thus by miracles attested the truth of his mission, and by his precepts and practice delineated the whole of our duty, it might seem that here his moral dispensation was sufficiently established; but far more than this the Divine Wisdom thought fit to add, in order the more effectually to answer the gracious designs of his providence: for,

Thirdly, He was pleased to inforce these his precepts by the greatest of all possible sanctions, by the doctrine of future rewards and punishments; yet lest these rewards, thus viewed through the distancing perspective of futurity, might not have their true influence upon our hopes, nor these punishments their full effect upon our fears; lest the present solicitations of our senses, the

pressing impetuosity of our passions, should make even these high motives inefficacious (and, surely, a very slight acquaintance with the obliquity of human nature will convince us that this was far from improbable) the Divine Mercy was,

Fourthly, Most graciously pleased to promise unto every sincere and humble believer the assistance of grace from above; of that effectual communication of his own Holy Spirit, which aiding, without superseding the natural powers of our reason; directing, without impelling, the freedom of our will, might powerfully help us in subduing every inordinate affection, enable us to harmonize every faculty of our souls, and bring them to that pitch of moral concord which God intended them to possess at their original constitution.

Thus, by a short deduction of revealed truths, we have been able clearly to discover the great purpose for which this assistance of the blessed Spirit of God was promised to the faithful followers of his Son. Our own imperfections, occasioned by the depravity of our appetites, and the supreme perfection of the Christian plan of morals, rendered somewhat more than a merely good inclination necessary to attain to that height of holiness, unto which Christ expected his disciples to aspire; without such divine aid, our progress towards Christian perfection would be rendered difficult, if not impossible; but with

it, it becomes easy and certain. Hence we see, that although the Gospel precepts, considered as a rule of morality, and the cogency of their sanction, viewed under the idea of a Divine Law, might not have been sufficient to insure our obedience, (and this too, though a more excellent rule cannot be conceived, nor a more cogent sanction promulged) yet, when to these are added the assisting efficacy of Divine Grace, the triple cord of Almighty Mercy, by which God is pleased to draw us unto himself, becomes strong and compleat; for thus "receiving the spirit of adoption, we become heirs of "God, and joint-heirs with Christ in his everlasting "kingdom."

I proceed now, by the assistance of the text, to point out the principal EFFECTS of this Divine Grace upon the mind of that Christian, to whom the mercy of the Almighty is pleased to impart its salutary influence; and these (though couched in the form of a benediction) the Apostle has clearly declared to be Joy, and Peace, and Hope; all of which must however be founded in Faith, because it is "in believing" only that he bids us to expect that these three blessings will, through the power of the Holy Ghost, continue for ever to be imparted.

And that Faith must and ought to have this precedence, seems almost self-evident. It possessed it, we are assured, amongst the first Christian converts. In

Natural Religion, we know that he who cometh to God, must first, not only believe in his existence, or "that he is," but also in his power and benevolence, "that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him." In like manner Revealed Religion requires us to believe, "that God sent his Son into the world to redeem us from the power of death and of sin." In this fundamental truth we must necessarily place our confidence, before any effect of that Holy Spirit can descend upon our souls. But when our faith is thus firmly established, and upon its best ground, that external and internal evidence which, as a cloud of witnesses, the Gospels bring to its confirmation, then, and then only, are we to expect its first hallowed effect, divine JOY, or, in the phrase of the text, to receive from the God of Hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost, JOY IN BELIEVING.

That such joyfulness should be the first offspring of our Faith, no Christian can be surprized at, when he considers what inestimable blessings Faith gives him to expect; when, by Faith alone, he is enabled to see that life and immortality which the Gospel has brought to light, and his restoration by a second Adam, to that eternity of existence of which he was deprived by the lapse of the first Adam; what then should hinder him, on the first impulse of the belief in this unmerited favour, to be exceeding glad of such great salvation?

That PEACE should be the immediate successor of this Joy, even the Peace of God surpassing all human understanding, is a blessing equally natural, and congenial with that which precedes it; for the whole tenor of Christ's revelation of himself to mankind proves him to be, what the Holy Scriptures emphatically style him, the Prince of Peace: a Prince who has put away far from us the enmity that was between the Creator and the creature: nothing further therefore need be said as to the congruity of such a succession of these two spiritual blessings. But that HOPE should come last in gradation is not, perhaps, so immediately obvious, and yet the Apostle has placed it thus in the Holy Triad. I can easily conceive that an objector might form the following specious argument against such an arrangement: "St. Paul says, in another place, that "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence "of things not seen: if this be true, Faith necessarily "supersedes, or at least includes, Hope; why then, if "we are already possessed of the substance, should we be "solicitous about the shadow?"

In answer to this, it is proper to enquire what Hope is, and that question will be best resolved, by putting it in comparison with its direct opposite, Fear, of which the author of the book, entitled the Wisdom of Solomon, has given us one of the best definitions that I think is to be met with in any moral writer: "Fear," says he, "is

"nothing else than the betraying of the succours which "Reason offereth."* And if so, we may with the same accuracy define Hope, in general, to be nothing else than a strengthener of those succours which Reason offereth; and, Christian Hope in particular, of those succours which Faith offereth: for as Faith must be founded on reasonable grounds, so that which succours the one, must of necessity support the other; hence, therefore, we may confidently assert, that the Apostle has very justly put Hope the last in his climax of spiritual blessings. We may also answer this objection in another manner, and affirm, that as Faith may exist without works, so also may it exist without Hope, in which we may predicate of the latter, as St. James did of the former, that it will be dead as to any beneficial effect: for instance, a man may believe, and that strongly, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; yet he may also believe himself to be so extremely sinful, that, on the sincerest repentance, he cannot hope personally to partake of that salvation. Here then, by a want of hope, the salutary effect of his Faith will be destroyed, and, to his own particular, his belief will profit him nothing; but when, by the assistance of the God of Hope, this blessed attribute is added to Faith, in such abundance as it is here promised, and as St. Paul himself experienced, then, though acknowledging ourselves, as he did, to be the chief of sinners, we are yet secured, as he was, from despair by

* Chap. xvii. 12.

the power of the Holy Ghost, from whence that Hope flows with an unremitting stream.

Thus, by analyzing the text, I have endeavoured to point out, not only what are the principal effects of this grace of God upon the mind of the true believer, but also to shew in what gradation he is to expect its internal operations; and if I have done this in a satisfactory manner, what must my audience think of those gloomy enthusiasts, who abounding, as they arrogantly profess that they do, with extraordinary manifestations, and sensible impulses of the same Holy Spirit, impress the minds of their affrighted followers with nothing but images of horror and despair. For if, as we have seen, Divine Joy be the first symptom of this heavenly operation in the breasts of the faithful, how little must that teacher seem to be possessed of it, who chooses only to communicate to others the very opposite sensations of melancholy and chagrin? Full as questionable are his pretensions to the second blessing of Divine Peace, when he is ever prompt to make invidious distinctions between Gospel and carnal Preachers, saintly and sinful hearers, and thereby to sow the seeds of religious dissension amongst his brethren. Still less can we suppose that he abounds with the last of these spiritual qualities, Divine Hope, when he denies the smallest pittance of it to all persons who do not think precisely as he does, concerning certain abstruse doctrinal points, which have been variously understood from the

very first ages of the Church, and will probably remain disputable to the very last.—But here I restrain myself, well aware, that, when the fire of enthusiasm is once kindled, all remonstrances are ineffectual; to apply to minds thus overheated the calm dictates of common sense, is to throw oil upon flame, and to increase its fury; nevertheless, to persons yet untainted with this too common contagion, reflections of this kind may not be without their use; it becomes, therefore, the regular Preacher sometimes to employ himself in this preventative exercise; to these persons, therefore, and with this benevolent intention, they are at present, with all due deference, addressed.

Yet when I address myself to such sober, yet sincere Christians, surely I may be permitted to proceed further. Yes, my Brethren, with that becoming energy which the important subject inspires, I will exhort you all seriously and earnestly to implore, from the fountain of never-ceasing mercy, those real those inestimable blessings, which true faith and unfeigned piety is fully warranted to expect from the communication of this Holy Spirit; for think not, because those extraordinary illuminations which the Enthusiast fancies, and which the Hypocrite pretends he is possessed of, are vain and fallacious, that therefore all hope of assistance from above is dubious and uncertain: be assured that He is faithful who promised that assistance; and therefore,

that his blessed Spirit is not far from every one of us: Rise therefore established in this Faith; Rise to that exalted pitch of Christian perfection which your Maker and your Redeemer command you to attain to, and towards which attainment they promise you an aid so necessary, so salutary, and so effectual: Reflect on the blessings which are by that means conveyed to you, joy, peace, and hope, blessings which, in a human sense, furnish the most solid satisfaction that mortality can aspire to: What are they then in a divine sense? What are they when that joy is sublimated far beyond any temporal delight; that peace beyond all terrestrial tranquillity; that hope far beyond the expectance of the most refined sublunary gratifications. Do they not then become those blessings of which the angels themselves, and the spirits of just men made perfect, participate in heaven? Blessings which are the principal jewels in the crown of immortality, and which reflect the ineffable radiance of the Divinity itself.

THE

RULE OF HONOUR

A PRINCIPLE TOO IMPERFECT

TO REGULATE

CHRISTIAN ACTION.

SERMON XIII.

Galat. i. 10.

DO I NOW PERSUADE MEN OR GOD? OR DO I SEEK TO PLEASE MEN? FOR IF I YET PLEASED MEN, I SHOULD NOT BE THE SERVANT OF CHRIST.

ST. Paul, we see, here puts two questions with respect to his own apostolic character, which may, at first sight, seem to take somewhat from the likeness of a moral pourtrait which he has elsewhere drawn of himself, and in which a principal feature was a solicitude to adapt his behaviour so much to the world, as to endeavour by it to be all things to all men; to the Jews, a Jew; and to the Greeks, a Greek. Yet this is easily reconciled to the text, if we recollect, from the true and general idea we have of his life and conversation, that he ever made his complacency to mankind subservient to his duty to God, that he regarded such complacency only so far as it added to his power of observing that duty, and pleased men, not seeking his own profit, but that, as an apostle and servant of Christ, he might forward the

conversion of sinners, and, by the very justifiable arts of general urbanity and particular civility, "save some."

This being granted, we may hence infer that the very rule which St. Paul laid down for his own conduct in his peculiar situation, may, and ought to be the general rule which all men should follow, even on the most common occasions; and that an attention to the laws (as they may be called in civilized states) of society, should be regarded, when such laws are not in opposition to the laws of God and of Christ; but that whenever they are in the least so, the former should be slighted and the other religiously observed. Obvious, however, as this truth is, and notwithstanding that divine aid which Revelation has graciously dispensed to natural reason, many Philosophers have placed their obligations to morality on foundations foreign from that of the duty of pleasing God; and either finding their convenience in allowing greater latitude to their behaviour, or aiming at the character of superior talents and reputation, either drawn away by a love of singularity, or misled by a vain veneration for antiquity, they have invented or adopted different systems, and have endeavoured, with incredible industry, to reconcile them to men's minds, and to propagate them as universal truths.

That this should be the case in the Pagan world, is not indeed much to be wondered at: The false and im-

perfect conceptions they had of the nature of the Deity, necessarily misled them in this point. It is true, they believed that the divinities they worshipped had power to punish and to reward them. They endeavoured therefore to appease them by sacrifices, and to propitiate them by vows; but to please them by a life conformable to their will, and, by so doing, to arrive at moral perfection, neither did nor could possibly enter into their imaginations. Indeed, if it had, they would have found it difficult to frame any uniform system of conduct upon it that could have pleased such a variety of deities, since we know there was scarce a single vice which was not patronized, scarce a single virtue which was not reprobated by one or other of that fancy-formed mob of beings.

Since, therefore, they could not ascertain that a life of purity and virtue was acceptable to their gods, their religion could never inspire them with virtue or purity. Accordingly we find it consisted chiefly in the due observance of certain rites and ceremonies, a belief in the Divine Existence, and the necessity of submitting to its decrees. Their Philosophers finding in this no just basis for morality, were under a necessity of recurring to other principles, and of founding the obligation to moral duties on Virtue, either for its own intrinsic excellence and beauty, or because it best contributed to the ease and pleasure of life, or else because it was the surest means of supporting what it constituted the dignity of human nature;

those who wished to place it on a still more permanent foundation, perhaps added the only immortality of which they had any adequate idea, that of fame and reputation with future ages.

I say not this to derogate from the merit of these philosophic worthies; many of them deserve the admiration, some even the love of all posterity; nevertheless the want of the religious principle has left a weakness in their reasonings, and visibly eclipsed that glory which a love of truth and a habit of virtue had spread over their illustrious characters.

Equally various, and equally imperfect have been many of the systems of modern moralists, insomuch that it would be almost an endless task to point out the false and flimsy arguments of all those pretended champions of freedom, and vindicators of the rights of reason, who, expelling Religion from their plan of Ethics, endeavour to support man in the severest conflicts, by declaiming to him upon the dignity of his nature; to shield him against the allurements of pleasure, even by interposing Pleasure herself; or who, giving him Prudence for a guide, pretend to secure him by her direction alone, from all the open as well as secret attacks of Error and of Vice.

Yet there is one of these principles of action which may, with propriety here, be examined; a principle that,

under the most specious appearance, has insinuated itself into a more general reception than any other, particularly with the active and polite part of the world, with the men of business and the men of pleasure: a principle, which, it must be confessed, when under the rule and influence of Religion, is capable of doing the greatest service to the cause of Virtue; but which, when setting up itself in opposition to her, becomes the most uncertain, the most fallacious of all other guides.

I speak of HONOUR, the insufficiency of whose influence upon morality, will appear from considering how liable it is to be perverted by SELF-INTEREST; by our irascible PASSIONS; by the spirit of PARTY; and by the spirit of FASHION.

1. The law of Reputation, if I may so call it, or those rules of behaviour to which we must conform, if we would keep on good terms with the world, maintain the character of an honest man, or claim the privileges of a gentleman, is what may justly be termed the sanction of Honour; and in this respect, it is allowed, it pretends to imitate the religion it would supplant, in that it teaches us to fulfil certain engagements, to ratify certain contracts, and to perform certain acts of equity, which written constitutions, and the course of civil justice, neither do oblige us to, nor can take within their cognizance: but it varies very materially from it, in that its

tests and obligations of right and wrong are of a different nature and authority. The test of right which Religion gives us is that of its being pleasing to God; that which Honour, of its being pleasing to men. The one certain and lasting as the truth and unchangeableness of God himself; the other mutable and unsettled as the capricious humour of mankind. The obligations and sanctions of Religion are in like manner the favour and protection of an all-wise, all-powerful Being; of Honour, the mere good opinion of our foolish and weak fellow-creatures. Thus, therefore, as the religious man is, in the language of Scripture, said to walk before God, the man of Honour may be said to walk before men; the one under the eye of an omniscient Being who spieth out all his ways; the other before a short-sighted observer, whose inspection he may continually elude, continually impose upon. Here then SELF-INTEREST begins her operations, and insinuates to the pretender to Honour, that, whatever deviations from virtue he makes secretly, he may make justifiably. That if he saves appearances, he saves his reputation, since reputation consists only in appearances. That by whatever unjust or dishonourable means he procures for himself either power, riches, or pleasure, he need only conceal the means safely to accomplish the end. That as the assessors of his conduct are liable to be imposed upon, it behoves him indeed to be discreet in his impositions upon them; yet, whenever his Interest calls one way, and his Honour the other, he may safely

follow the former, if he can so manage (which he frequently may) as not to seem to discard the latter.

2. We grant, nevertheless, that there are natures noble and generous enough to be above the influence of so groveling a passion as self-interest: but are there natures cool and philosophic enough to be proof against all other PASSIONS, to be beyond the impulse of revenge, jealousy, and anger? If there are not, let us consider how imperfect a restraint, how weak a chain the principle of Honour is able to cast on any of these stronger passions. But need we consider this? Alas, no! We know that Honour rather breaks than binds the chain in many instances: that to some, even of the most violent passions, she not only gives the license of the rein, but adds also the impulse of the spur. We know that, though indeed she lays an arrogant claim to the strictest observances of equity, and in some respects carries this into the nicest refinements, yet in others she admits, nay prompts the most affecting of injuries. We know that the man of Honour, in gratification of his revenge, nay, sometimes even of his vanity, has brought ruin on families, which justice, humanity, nay which particular obligations and gratitude, admonished him to favour and to protect. We know, and we cannot mention it without horror, that, misled by this principle, he thinks it sometimes lawful, nay even necessary, to take up the dismal alternative, either of robbing his nearest and best friend of life, or

rushing himself upon death, on the one hand without just cause, on the other without any preparation.

3. The spirit of PARTY is also a third cause of perverting this principle, and frequently more than even our self-interest or our passions; and this ought here to be insisted upon as the peculiar unhappiness of our own age and nation: for it is very obvious what a degree of reputation may be procured and even secured by boldly inlisting ourselves in any particular interest; how many vices may be palliated, and how many virtues rendered unnecessary by the strength of this merit alone; that to be steady in our political connections, whether they be wrong or right, is the consummate test of Honour with the persons on whose side we engage. Hence it sometimes becomes dishonourable not to concur in particular actions which our conscience, which our reason revolts against, if the general welfare of the party in which we have inlisted ourselves require our concurrence. Hence, by the touch of political alchymy, Vice is converted into Virtue, Virtue into Vice; and hence that species of morality becomes only current which bears the stamp of our particular party upon its surface.

4. But Honour has also another antagonist to struggle with, who almost constantly subdues and leads her in triumph, and this may be termed the spirit of FASHION. For it has ever been the case in all kingdoms and nations

of the world, that at different times, different virtues and vices have had the ascendency, and observed a continual gradation of rise, progress, and decline. Thus the reigning virtue and the reigning vice are terms of universal use and application. Every generation has had both peculiar to itself, nor is our own an exception in either.

If this fact be allowed, it will necessarily follow from it, that the man of Honour may give into some vices without either infringing upon the rules of his principle, or danger of incurring its penalty, the loss of the world's good opinion: he may be sure to find advocates enough for his immorality, provided it be the species of immorality in vogue: nor can he fear to be excluded, on that account, from what is called the best company. Persons of his own turn will countenance him from self-interest; others will pardon him for his other virtues: and the few who are really too good to be quite so candid, may yet charitably impute his defects to the force of ill example and perverted custom. Thus as reputation is the sanction of Honour; and as the commission of almost every vice has, at different times and in different countries, ceased to be disreputable, we may fairly conclude that Honour on this account alone is too weak and uncertain to found a steady principle of moral action upon it; much more so when considered with the other reasons we have before mentioned, and which prove it not only to be the dupe of Fashion, but the slave of Party; not

only an incentive to some of our most hurtful passions, but a tool to the meanest of them all, our self-interest.

If such be Honour, let us not rely on so fallacious a guide; yet at the same time let us not discard her: weak though she be as a leader, she is still a good associate; an associate capable of promoting the interests of Virtue, because necessary to the well-being of society; but this only when under the rule and influence of Religion. If therefore Religion go before, Honour will be sure to follow after. He that walketh before God uprightly can never walk before men dishonourably. He that but strives to be perfect in the sight of his Creator, may well hope to be so in the sight of his fellow-creatures; or, if blinded by prejudice, or prompted by malevolence, those fellow-creatures should either despise or condemn him, yet with a resolution and dignity peculiar to his character, he triumphs not more in subduing his own passions than in bravely bearing up against the passions of his adversaries; not more in despising imaginary dangers than in resisting real temptations. Conscious of his dependence on an Almighty protector, and adorned with a humility and modesty resulting from a just sense of that dependence, he breathes nothing but universal love and benevolence to mankind: hence, neglecting his particular for the sake of general utility, he feels his self-interest absorbed in public spirit; his blind and tumultuous passions converted into the affectionate and rational

fervors of Christian charity; he knows no party but the party of his crucified Redeemer; no fashion which the folly of this world prescribes to him; a world, the very wisdom of which he knows is but foolishness with his God.

Such is the man who endeavours to please God; such the character which that God declares to be well-pleasing in his sight.—To which that we may all with true Christian earnestness aspire, God of his infinite mercy grant through Jesus Christ our Lord.

GOD,

THE

UNIVERSAL AND EQUAL FATHER

OF ALL

MANKIND.

The following is the only SERMON in this Volume which has been previously published: It was occasionally preached in York Cathedral, on Sunday the 27th of January, 1788, to promote a Petition to Parliament, then under signature, for the Abolition of the AFRICAN SLAVE-TRADE; and was printed at the request of Sir William Milner, Bart. then Lord Mayor, and of the Gentlemen of the Corporation of the City of York, to whom it was inscribed.

SERMON XIV.

Acts xvii. 28.

—FOR WE ALSO ARE HIS OFFSPRING.*

THIS quotation from a Greek, and consequently a heathen Poet, the eloquent Apostle of the Gentiles condescended to use, when he was endeavouring to convert the greatest masters of human wisdom, from the greatest proof of human folly, the worship of idols; when he was asserting the unity of that supreme first cause, which they so little understood, as to erect an altar to him under the appellation of *the unknown God*. This universal source of life, breath, and all created beings, he declares to them, "made of one blood, all men to dwell on the face "of the earth," and determined, by his divine Prescience, both the times of their existence, and the bounds of their habitation.

Of these two fundamental truths, upon which not only natural but revealed religion is founded, the existence of a first cause, and the deduction thence of all created

* Τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμεν. ARATUS.

beings, it is clear from the text that the heathens themselves were apprised, though they failed to draw from them that consequence, which, of all others, seems the most natural, that created beings, of the same species, must of necessity possess the same inherent rights; and that the human species, in particular, being, as the Apostle phrases it, of the same blood, had all of them the same pretensions to the equal blessings of nature, being formed by the same hand, and endued with the same faculties for enjoying pleasure, and suffering pain; that though the place or climate in which they happened to be born, and the time of their birth, or, to speak more accurately in the words of St. Paul, "the times which "God had appointed them, and the bounds of their "habitation," might occasion some accidental difference as to the cultivation of those faculties, and the modes of those pleasures and pains, yet the original capacity for all of them was still the same; and that all being alike human creatures, there was neither gift nor faculty bestowed on the nature of humanity that belonged of right more to one than another of the human species.

To the divine mission of St. Paul nothing was more necessary than the establishment of this primary truth; he was the professed Apostle of the Gentiles, and under that character had as many prejudices to overcome, as if, like St. Peter, he had only been the Apostle of the Jews and their proselytes. The Jews, deeming them-

selves the peculiar people of God, we know, had the strongest objection imaginable to a Messiah who was to save or redeem any nation except their own; and the Greeks, who held all nations but theirs to be barbarians, were full as unlikely to embrace a faith to be held in common, not only with the Jews, but the rest of a barbarous world: the doctrine which exhorted all men, wherever situated, to embrace one common salvation, was therefore as little suited to the pretensions of the one as to the pride of the other.

But though St. Paul, by proceeding upon this fundamental truth, and thence deducing the doctrine of an universal Redeemer, disseminated the Gospel so far, as to make the success of his preaching a miracle almost equal to any performed by his divine master, insomuch that Infidelity has been put to its utmost subterfuges to invalidate its force; yet this truth itself, this necessary inference from the Gospel, that all men are the offspring of God, was not, either by himself or his successors, so far established in a refractory world as to make it an universal rule of moral action; nay, we have it still to lament that it is as little attended to at this present hour, as it was when the Apostle first preached it to the Athenians. The distinction between Greek and Barbarian has indeed ceased, or rather names and scenes are shifted, and the Greeks are now become, in the eyes of the more civilized nations in Europe, themselves barba-

rians; yet every distinct European state, in proportion as it acquires a real, or even an assumed pretension to superior civilization, is too apt to impute to the rest of the world a proportional degree of barbarity, and consequently, whatever they may think, they are sometimes inclined to act toward them, as if they were not of the same sacred original. Nor is this much to be wondered at, when we reflect that the same false notion prevails amongst individuals of the same nation: Every accidental advantage, which either birth, riches, or education gives, becomes nutriment to this over-weening pride, and equally leads the possessors of them to behave to those who want such casual advantages, as if they derived their existence from two different sources.

But there is one enormous prejudice of this kind, which, for a long series of years, has infected the European part of the globe, not only individually but nationally; a prejudice which Christianity has almost universally failed to eradicate, I mean that futile, but at the same time horrible, opinion, which, resting itself on argument that can go no deeper than the very surface and tincture of the skin, has led many, who yet call themselves Christians, to treat beings of the same divine origin with themselves, even worse than they think themselves permitted to treat the beasts that perish: Beings that have immortal souls like themselves, enshrined in a body which, though it has a variation of

complexion, has hardly any in form or in feature. This more than Pagan prejudice I should think myself worthily employed in execrating through the remainder of this discourse, did I not foresee, with heart-felt satisfaction, that wiser and better heads than my own are about to endeavour, by the best and most legal means, at a demolition of the evil, by putting a stop to that merchandize—dreadful term! when employed to signify the traffic which MEN make of MEN, which has so long been the worst of disgraces to the name of Christians and of Britons.

But were I to enter the lists against those, and, to the reproach of human nature itself, some there are who vindicate what they call the SLAVE TRADE, and who, by the very term they use, do enough to make every benevolent breast receive their arguments with detestation, I should think that I profaned the sanctity of this place, that I disgraced the dignity of my subject, which is no less than the great cause of humanity; I should think that I surrendered the principles of Christianity, if I condescended to answer any of their political reasonings; or even deigned to take into consideration the advantages which accrue from the permission, or the disadvantages which might result from the prohibition of this inhuman barter. Still more should I think that I did dishonour to myself, as a preacher of the Gospel of Christ, if, with all the insipid coldness of a common

moralist, I should for a moment allow the intellectual faculties of the African man to be naturally inferior to those of the European, and then philosophically argue, that as plants may be meliorated and become more vigorous by transplanting them into a richer soil, so it might be possible, by the culture of education, to improve the intellects even of an African Savage.*

* That the natural inferiority of their understanding makes the Negroes incapable of receiving such culture, will hardly be admitted by any true Christian, who considers that the Apostle Philip was sent, by a divinely appointed messenger, to meet the Ethiopian Eunuch at Gaza in the Desert, and there baptize him (See Acts viii. 26.) We are told here that this personage, the Treasurer of Queen Candace, had before believed in the Divine Unity, and was on his journey to worship at Jerusalem, where he had probably been before admitted by the Jews, as a proselyte of the gate. We find too that he was sufficiently skilled in Hebrew literature to read the sublime poetry of Isaiah, and that he was peculiarly chosen of God to be one of the first converts to Christianity, his conversion being placed in order of time before that of Saul. Such a believer will certainly thence infer, that as God is no respecter of persons, he has made no distinction in his gifts to the Human Species. In prosecuting this disquisition further, men of letters may perhaps be led to investigate an opinion of a very late French writer, M. Volney, who in his Travels into Syria and Egypt (I quote from the English translation of them, Vol. I. p. 81) has, amongst some other historical reasons, adduced a passage from Herodotus, who believes that as the Colchi were an antient colony from Egypt, they were, like the Egyptians, actually Negroes. The words of the Father of History are, ἄυλος δὲ ἕκαστα τῇδε, καὶ ὅτι μελάγχροες εἰσι καὶ ὀλότριχες. Liber ii. cap. 104. "That, like them, they have black skins and frizzled hair." The reflection which the learned traveller makes on this is so very apposite to the general doctrine of my discourse, that it is on that account I have chiefly

Far from myself, far from all who should either write, preach, or think upon the subject with the spirit of those Gospels in their minds, be so tame, so unanimated a mode of treating the subject. If ever Eloquence was in its place, here might it exert its utmost force, without a fear of misleading Reason, or of acting too powerfully upon the passions. If ever Argumentation, or Logic, can be useless or misapplied, it is here they must be so, because they would be employed in the

quoted it. "This historical fact affords to philosophy an inte- "resting subject of reflection. How are we astonished when "we behold the present barbarism and ignorance of the Copts "descended from the profound genius of the Egyptians, and the "brilliant intelligence of the Greeks; when we reflect that to "the race of Negroes, at present our Slaves, and the object of "our extreme contempt, we owe our Arts, Sciences, and even "the very use of Speech; and when we recollect that in the "midst of those nations, who call themselves the friends of "Liberty and Humanity, the most barbarous of Slaveries is jus- "tified, and that it is even a problem whether the understanding "of Negroes be of the same species with that of White Men!" P. 83.

But as the instance of *one* individual is with me, and perhaps will be with the generality of my readers, sufficient to decide on this question, let me, lastly, quote the letters of poor Ignatius Sancho, as a sufficient proof not only of African capacity, but of true humanity. This man received the principal advantages resulting from European culture in a great family, in which he was many years a menial servant, but which I should be apt to think not the best school, did I not at the same time reflect that the most noble head of that family must (I speak from knowledge of the late Duke of Montagu's innate benevolence) have uniformly set him the best of all examples.—*See the Preface to* Sancho's Letters.

refutation of self-evident falsehood. If ever the true genius of Christianity, which is then best exerted when it gives glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men, can be urged with superior efficacy to this its twofold purpose, it must be in reprobating a practice which derogates from the glory of that God, and spreads destruction, carnage, and tyranny over a great part of that species of beings born to be rational, and capable, by good treatment, of being highly so, and which he has dignified with the title of his offspring.

But even from the last and best of these assistances, the inspired writings themselves, it seems unnecessary to borrow aid on this occasion. Those of my hearers, who are least versed in their sacred pages, must have learned from them this plain, yet important truth, that they ought to do to others as they would wish others should do to them; and they must be ignorant indeed if they do not deduce from that divine rule this direct consequence, that as they would not themselves wish to be NEGRO SLAVES, so they ought to wish, and, as far as possible, endeavour to free every Negro from the bonds of slavery.

This matter then being so very obvious to every understanding, I will venture to turn my discourse to a topic, from which I conceive it possible, yet barely possible, that some little prejudice may arise against this

most benevolent attempt, resulting from the place, time, and persons whence the humane idea originated. It commenced first, as is well known, in that part of America which was very lately subject to the crown of Great-Britain, and soon after the time when its inhabitants ceased to be our fellow-subjects, but not to be our fellow Christians. To descend more minutely into particulars (endeavouring at the same time cautiously to avoid any expression that might tend to awaken the least spark of jealousy) it began, I believe, first in the state of Pensylvania, wherein a religious sect had long been established, which, for certain singular notions and habits that they adopted, the dissolute court of Charles the Second had called by an opprobrious name. But whatever might then, or may now be justly objected to these notions, or to any enthusiastic tenet of theirs, which we hold to be unscriptural, I have yet the boldness to assert, that, as good subjects and good citizens, the conduct of this Society has long made them respectable at home; the discreet management of their own poor has made them even an object of emulation. It is true, that the simplicity of their manners, and of their deportment, may incur the contempt of the falsely polite, and the ridicule of frivolous and unfeeling fashion; yet such ridicule and such contempt, I am persuaded, they will contentedly bear, if they can only gain, what is surely their due, that attention to the example they have set, which, despising every idle prejudice, may lead all denomina-

tions of Christians heartily to concur in that righteous cause which they began disinterestedly, have pursued steadily, and seem to proceed in successfully; insomuch that, did the sobriety of their sect suffer them to glorify themselves before men, they might say with honest confidence, "We are employed on a godly matter, a matter in "which he, whom the Papacy has called the Most Chris- "tian, and he whom he has called the Most Catholic "King, might be proud to join us. Thou also, of all others, "mightest be proud to join us, who, inheriting by suc- "cession that title of Defender of the Faith, which the "same spirit of Antichrist first conferred on a* tyrant, "holdest it now by the best of all human charters, the "united suffrages of a free and a Protestant people." Thus might these plain men express a bold, but at the same time a most just sentiment; and there is no doubt but that one of these Monarchs would, if directed only by the dictates of his own heart, be ready to join them. —But the wisdom of our Constitution, by setting limits to his power, has, in this peculiar case, set limits to his humanity.—He cannot, and, I trust, he would not wish to say, "I will by my own individual authority put an "absolute prohibition on this unchristian traffic." But he might and would justly say, "To the petitions of my "people, I will lend a ready ear; to the determinations

* Henry VIII. to whom Pope Leo X. gave this title as a reward for a defence of the Papal Power and Tenets which the King had written againt Luther.

" of my parliament I will afford a joyful sanction." May he not be deprived of that joy! for who but the King of a free, as well as a Protestant nation, should have the glory of leading the other potentates of Europe on so god-like an enterprize! May he not be deprived of that glory! May the voice of his parliament be unanimous in the cause; in that cause may the petitions of his people be strenuous, urgent, and universal!

To the universality of such petitions I have the pleasure to find that the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor of this antient city, and the worshipful the Aldermen have, like some other corporate bodies in the kingdom, judiciously contributed their assistance; and hence it is reasonably to be inferred, that the gentry, clergy, and all other its inhabitants will follow their laudable example. But *laudable* is too feeble an epithet on this occasion, it is moral Patriotism!* it is Christian Heroism!

Having said this, I have only to apologize for myself,

* This epithet is somewhat *hazarded;* I would be understood to mean by it, that as patriotism itself only signifies the love of our country, so with this addition, the term indicates a love of mankind under the idea of *one common family*. Natural religion teaches this, but Revelation goes farther, it bids us to love and do good to all men as *brethren:* to endeavour therefore to give freedom to Slaves, because they are our *brethren*, I denominate Christian Heroism. Revelation goes farther still, and considers Christians, one with another, as limbs or members of one body, the head of which is Christ the Lord. *See Ephes. passim.*

on having addrest you so long in a stile and manner somewhat unusual in discourses from this place. Let the peculiarity, as well as the importance of the subject plead my excuse. But if the manner in which I have treated it, should not be thought improper; if it should only be thought well intended, let me have reason to hope that what I have said may, when this great question comes before the Parliament, induce my present audience to join in the public prayer of our Church with peculiar fervour, that Almighty God "would be pleased to direct "and prosper all their consultations to the advancement "of his glory, the good of his Church, the safety, honour, "and welfare of our Sovereign and his kingdoms:" for what can be more for the advancement of God's glory than the emancipation of whole nations from the worst of slavery? What more for the good of his Church, than the almost certain introduction of innumerable tribes of free-men, then only capable of becoming good and practical Christians, into its sacred pale? * What more for

* To prove this assertion fully would require a separate discourse. So far as civilization is concerned in the question, it has been well discussed by the masterly pen of a Warburton, in a sermon delivered to the Society for propagating the Gospel in foreign parts, 1766. *See his Works published by the Bishop of Worcester.* —I wish however to refer my readers to a very curious letter from the Indians in the back settlements of America, printed by the Society in the account of their proceedings that same year. In that letter the Savages, in their rude yet energetic manner, request English working tools as well as English missionaries to be sent to them; whence the learned Bishop very sagely infers,

the safety, honour, and welfare of our Sovereign and his kingdoms, than the utter abolition of that execrable commerce, which has been so long the disgrace of every king, of every nation that have permitted it? A commerce, which, if longer persisted in, may draw down the vengeance of an offended God to visit, not only Great Britain, but all Europe, with every calamity which they justly deserve who even connive at the destruction, or permit the captivity, of HIS OFFSPRING.

that civilization should always either precede or accompany conversion.

How much the benevolent intention of the Society abovementioned has been impeded, if not absolutely prevented, not only by the *Slave-seller* but the *Slave-buyer*, may be gathered from a most judicious discourse of the present Bishop of Bangor, preached before that Society in the year 1787, which I earnestly recommend to the reader, as he will there find arguments against the Slave-Trade, that will make him ample amends for any deficiency of them in these few and hastily-written pages.

ON THE

PROPHETICAL TENDENCY

OF

CHRIST'S DISCOURSE

WITH

NICODEMUS.

SERMON XV.

St. John iii. 8.

THE WIND BLOWETH WHERE IT LISTETH, AND THOU HEAREST THE SOUND THEREOF, BUT CANST NOT TELL WHENCE IT COMETH AND WHITHER IT GOETH; SO IS EVERY ONE THAT IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT.

THIS is part of the remarkable conversation, which our Saviour held with the Pharisee, Nicodemus; and a text usually cited by those persons who hold the doctrine of a new-birth in a literal sense, and suppose that Christian regeneration is a certain miraculous impulse communicated in a sensible manner, by the Holy Ghost, to such peculiar favorites of Heaven, as are supposed to constitute the elect. In consequence of which, they believe that without some such self-convincing circumstance, which they denominate an internal feeling, no Christian can be assured that he is in a state of Grace, that his Salvation is secured, or his Sins pardoned.

Now, as this opinion has frequently been productive of the worst consequences, and led its mistaken adherents

through every degree of enthusiasm up to absolute madness, it may not be amiss to examine whether the text in question affords any foundation for such a doctrine. I shall therefore compare it with the context, and after reciting the dialogue, of which this verse is a portion, shall examine the several parts of it distinctly, in order to find out the true scope and meaning of the whole: the only rational way, that I know of, to clear up a difficulty, either in the Scriptures, or any other species of writing.

This person, a man of note and consequence amongst the Jews, by sect a Pharisee, and a leader, as is believed, not only in the Synagogue, but the Sanhedrim, came privately to Jesus by night, to confess to him that he believed him to be divinely commissioned, on the best evidence, the evidence of miracles: "Rabbi (says he) "we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for "no man can do these miracles that thou doest, unless "God be with him." This beginning seems to be preparatory to a question he was about to put to him, which, it is highly probable, was the principal cause of his coming, and of desiring this private conference with him, namely, to know, after acknowledging him to be a Prophet, whether he was the very Prophet, the promised Messias, that temporal deliverer from whom he, and the rest of his nation, expected such peculiar civil advantages. This, I say, seems to be the question intended, by the manner in which Jesus interrupts him, answering (as

was customary with him on many other occasions) the question, before it was directly asked: "Verily, verily, "I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he can- "not see the kingdom of God." Now the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the Messias, were then, and have since been always allowed to be terms of the same import. The Jewish Ruler would, therefore, naturally understand by this declaration, that no man could confess the Messias, or enter into his kingdom, without being born again. He did so; and, taking the term literally, thus exprest his astonishment—"How can a man be "born again, when he is old? Can he enter a second "time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Jesus seeing his error, condescends now to explain himself further, and to inform him that he spake not literally, but figuratively. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except "a man be born again of water, and of the spirit, he "cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Now the Pharisee would undoubtedly understand the first part of this sentence, to mean Baptism, because that rite or ordinance had already been practised, and was clearly enough exprest in being "born again of water." But, as this conversation was held with him, before the descent of the Holy Ghost, the subsequent terms of being "born of the "spirit" must, of necessity, at the time be dark and enigmatical. Jesus therefore only dilates upon this latter part, and in these words, "that which is born of the flesh "is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit;

" marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born " again;" as if he had said, I do not mean that ye shall be born again in an earthly or corporeal sense, but in a divine and spiritual one. You suppose grossly that I speak of your being born again of your natural mother, whereas I mean that you shall be born again of a supernatural and heavenly comforter, which shall come upon you like " the wind which bloweth where it listeth, and " thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell " whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every " one that is born of the spirit." Thus I would chuse to connect the text with the context, as words plainly prophetical of the descent of the Holy Ghost, as it happened on the day of Pentecost, which we now commemorate, when it " came suddenly on the disciples like a rushing " mighty wind, and filled the house where they were " sitting."

A late excellent writer,* when developing the true idea of Prophecy, justly observes, that a considerable degree of obscurity may be reasonably expected to attend, and indeed usually does attend, all divine predictions on their first delivery. And this, we see, was the case when the Prophecy under our present consideration was delivered. Nicodemus did not understand it, and " an- " swered and said, How can these things be?" Jesus

* Vide Dr. Hurd's Introduction to the Prophecies, &c.—Sermon 3d, page 55.

replied, " Art thou a Master in Israel and knowest not " these things?" Art thou so little conversant in those prophetical writers, (thou, who, as a Ruler in that very nation to whom their prophecies relate, oughtest to make them thy principal study,) art thou so ignorant as not to know that this spirit will be poured out in that universal manner, which Isaiah and others of thy prophets have predicted. But if thou art, I am not: " Verily, verily, I " say unto thee, we speak what we do know, and testify " what we have seen, and ye believe not our witness." As if he had said, I know all this from experience, and am a living evidence of its truth, for when I was born again of water, by John's Baptism, I was also born again of the Spirit, by the heavens opening, and the Holy Ghost suddenly and visibly descending upon me; yet ye receive not my witness; if I have told you of earthly things, or facts * done upon earth (for this is the literal version of the original phrase) and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things. These words, I think, clearly imply the following meaning: I tell you only of an event, miraculous indeed, yet which will soon appear on this earth, and has already appeared at my own baptism. If, therefore, you can neither believe, nor comprehend this, how incredulous would you be, if I opened to you the whole heavenly scheme of man's redemption, and my mediation? This hitherto no man knows, (for it is not yet compleated) except he, who

* Τὰ ἐπιγεία τὰ ἐπουράνια.

" to perfect it, " for no man hath ascended into heaven, " but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of " Man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the " Serpent in the Wilderness, even so must the Son of " Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him " should not perish, but have eternal life." Here again (which I think greatly corroborates my interpretation of the text) Jesus delivers a second prophecy concerning his crucifixion, inveloped in the same figurative language with the former; which, though clearer to us at present, would certainly be equally obscure to the hearer, at the time it was delivered, with that which preceded it. For, as he could, then, have no expectation that Christ would be crucified, the image of the Serpent being lifted up would give him no idea of that peculiar event. After the fact had happened, it would, indeed, strike him with the fullest measure of conviction; and so, also, after the descent of the Holy Ghost, the other prophecy would appear equally evident; and, as he was probably an eye witness of both these events, it would not be, till after he had seen both, that he would find his question fully answered, or be convinced that Jesus, whose miracles had before declared him to be a Prophet, was the real Messias and Son of God.

Through the whole, therefore, of this remarkable conversation, it seems to have been the intention of our Blessed Saviour to give Nicodemus that kind of intelli-

gence concerning himself, and his divine mission, which would only be understood, when that mission was compleated, and this, conformably to his behaviour on all similar occasions; for, to have declared in express terms, that he was the Messias or King of the Jews, would, at this time, have been premature, when speaking to a ruler of that nation, and a declaration which, as it might have interfered with the great end of his coming into the world, we know, he avoided making, till he came before Pilate to receive his final sentence; when, as what he then said amounted to an acknowledgment of the charge brought against him, it was more likely to ensure that death which he came to suffer for our sake.* On the present occasion, therefore, he prudently chose to wrap the two principal events of his mission in prophetical language, yet at the same time took care to express them in such precise and exact figures, that there could not be the least doubt of their meaning after the events, which they predicted, had come to pass. For what could more plainly delineate Christ's crucifixion than the symbol of

* I recollect only one exception to his reserve on the subject before his trial, and that was in his conversation with the woman of Sychar, at Jacob's well, (*See John, chap.* iv. *v.* 26,) when, on her barely mentioning the Messiah, he declared to her in express terms "I am he;" and this seems to have been the reason:—He knew that such an open declaration made to her could be attended with no consequence of this kind, or be used in testimony by those who would accuse him before Pilate; because, as the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, they would not on that occasion use Samaritan evidence.

the Serpent lifted up by Moses in the Wilderness? Or what more clearly describe the descent of the Holy Ghost, than these words, "the wind bloweth where it "listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst "not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth." For this was the very mode and manner in which the Holy Spirit "came upon the disciples, as a rushing mighty "wind." Every man, therefore, who was born of the spirit (so exact is the analogy) on the day of Pentecost heard this sound in the manner thus foretold; and it was then, and not till then, that the Kingdom of God was (in Gospel phrase) seen, or entered into; for all Interpreters of that Gospel agree, that the descent of the Holy Ghost was the miracle which sealed the great Charter of our Salvation, and that, until this important moment, the wonderful scheme of man's redemption was not compleated.

I here finish my interpretation of the text: and if, on mature reflection, it appears to be a true one, the following inferences are not only naturally deducible from it, but tend to confirm it.

First, It is evident that in consequence of this prophecy, during the apostolic age, if not some time after, this miraculous manner of being born again of the spirit, must constantly have followed the sacrament of Baptism: And the history of the time shews that it did so: Nay, we read in the Acts of the Apostles, that, in one particu-

lar instance, it even preceded Baptism. This was in the case of the first Gentile Converts, in the house of Cornelius, where, "while Peter was yet preaching, the "Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word:" Insomuch that the Apostle cried out, "Can any man "forbid water that these should not be baptized, who "have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" So true was the prediction of Jesus, that at the commencement of the reign of Messias, which he expressed to Nicodemus by the terms of seeing or entering into the Kingdom of God; every man should be thus born again of water and of the spirit!

The second inference is, that, when Christianity was so far propagated in the world, as to be able to proceed and extend itself without a sensible display of the divine power, this sudden method of being born of the spirit must cease with the gift of tongues, and the rest of the extraordinary miracles, employed for that momentous purpose. The text, therefore, in question, gives no shadow of support to that enthusiastic notion, which some have entertained of Christian Regeneration, because as we have seen, it was intended to be prophetical of the descent of the Holy Ghost, on the Day of Pentecost, and in the Apostolical age of the Church; and hence we conclude that no person can expect to be born again of the spirit thus miraculously at present, unless he expects this to happen in the very manner in which it fell

on the Apostles, which few, if any, Enthusiasts have been over-heated enough to pretend.

Lastly, we infer, that, by taking away this single text from those many other, which support the real Doctrine of Christian Regeneration, we only take from it what frequently has been, and still would be, liable to lead many well disposed believers into error; and by placing it among the prophetical evidences of the truth of Christ's mission, we strengthen that great argument of the credibility of our holy religion. However this be, that renovation of the spirit stands still on firm scriptural ground, which, on the authority of St. Paul, and all other inspired writers, every good Christian is to expect will be superadded, by the grace of God, to his own sincere endeavours. He is only forbidden (if this interpretation of the text be the true one) to expect that this will come upon him in a sensible manner, "like the wind, which bloweth where it listeth, and of which he fancies that he hears the sound, but cannot give any rational account whence it cometh, or whither it goeth."

ON

THE DUTY

OF AVOIDING

BAD COMPANY

INSTANCED IN THAT OF

GAMESTERS.

SERMON XVI.

Ephesians v. 16.

REDEEMING THE TIME, BECAUSE THE DAYS ARE EVIL.

THIS is one of the many texts in Scripture, (particularly in St. Paul's Epistles) which, by being thus separated from its context, has been thought to inculcate a very different precept from that which the writer originally intended. It has been made to signify that we ought, by reforming our past conduct, to redeem the time misspent, and employ what remains to a better purpose. In this sense it has frequently been taken as a Theme for inculcating so important a Christian Doctrine, the practice of which is indeed the only way by which true repentance can be ascertained, or known by its fruits. Yet, notwithstanding this, I am apt to think that no text of holy Scripture ought to be wrested from its primary meaning, even for so good a purpose as I allow this to have been; because such a liberty, taken with a profane writer, would be unjustifiable; with an inspired one, therefore, it must be blameable.

Now, that St. Paul meant by the term he has here employed, to convey a precept very different from that which I have mentioned, the following observations, I think, will make very evident :—His Christian converts both at Ephesus and at Colosse, (for to the Colossians he addresses the same precept in the very same terms) lived in two idolatrous regions, and therefore were equally obliged, in the common intercourse of Society, to converse with the Pagan inhabitants ; He therefore advises them to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, withdrawing from the market or concourse of the world (for that is the literal version of the Greek word) as much of their own time as possible, because the days were evil ; intimating by these latter words, that the corrupt conversation of their neighbours, the heathens, might injure the purity of their newly-acquired Christian morals ; and that this is the true meaning of the passage in contemplation, will appear evident from comparing it with the parallel one, in the Epistle to the Colossians, the 4th chapter, and 5th verse, where he says, according to our common translation,—" Walk in Wisdom to-" wards them that are without, that is, who are not " Members of the Christian Congregation, redeeming " the time:" Here using the very same Greek verb, for the same purpose he had before done, when writing to the Ephesians.

If any thing more be necessary to prove that this is no

novel or unauthorised translation of the word, I shall quote a passage in the Prophet Daniel, in which the same Greek verb, used by the Seventy Interpreters, is expressed by our English translators of it in this sense: It is in that part of the history where King Nebuchadnezzar (with an absurdity common to tyrants) blames his Chaldean Magicians, because they were not able to interpret a Dream, which himself had forgot. "I know," says he, "of a certainty that you would *gain* time, because "the thing is gone from me."—And besides this, I do not believe there are any passages, either in the New Testament or the Septuagint, where this term (so seldom occurring in either) might not be so rendered with advantage.*

Taking, therefore, the text now explained to convey this meaning, I shall attempt to shew that the precept it contains, though delivered by St. Paul to a particular

* Mr. Locke, in his note upon the text, explains it thus: "That "the Ephesians should carefully avoid the Pollutions so familiar "among the Gentiles they lived with, yet to take care by their "prudent carriage not to give them any offence." He saw therefore plainly that the common translation was wrong, because it did not connect with what went before or after it, but he seems not to have attended to the precise meaning of the original word ἐξαγοράζω, to take out of the forum. The verb occurs again in St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, and is translated by *redeem*, but in both these places it might have been rendered, "Christ "has taken us away, or withdrawn us from the Curse of the Law." chap iii. p. 14, and "to withdraw them that were under the Law," chap. iv. v. 5.

set of Christians, in a particular situation, preseribes a general caution to all others with respeet to their conduct, as Members of Soeiety; it warns them to serutinize into the prevailing habits and fashions of the age in which they live, and to be more free or more reserved in giving up their own time to a general intercourse with the world, in proportion as they conceive such intercourse favourable or prejudicial to what ought ever to be deemed the one thing needful, the Salvation of their own Souls.

St. Paul, with the authority of an Apostle, declared to the Ephesians, that the days were evil, at the time when he wrote to them. An Expositor of his doctrines, may at least venture to ask his audienee, whether they think the times they live in are good; and this question, put either at the present period, or at any interval prior to it, since St. Paul's time, would be sure of being answered in the negative; but a general declaration that the days are evil, is not that with whieh I would content myself, for in every age there appears to have been, as in the present, some particular evil, vice, habit, or fashion, which is predominant, and takes the lead of all others. From those, therefore, who are notorious for it, this Apostolie Precept admonishes us to withdraw ourselves as much as possible, and not bring our own time to so bad a market. The Ephesian and Colossian Christians, we find, living amongst Idolaters, could not wholly absent

themselves from their Society: St. Paul therefore admonishes them to walk circumspectly among them, and with wisdom, and to barter no more of their own time with them than the common necessary offices of Society might require. He, *who was all things to all men, that by all means he might gain some*, would not carry his caution to the extreme, and prohibit them from ever mixing in their company. He wished indeed that in their conversation with them, their discourse should always be with *grace, seasoned with salt*, that is, with Christian purity of sentiment; but were they to withdraw entirely from their society, he well knew that so austere and imprudent a conduct would at least tend to provoke the unconverted Heathen to reject the Gospel, if not to persecute those who had already embraced it.

These things premised, and the true meaning of the text united with its context, being, I presume, fully established, I shall employ the remainder of this discourse in reprobating one enormous vice, which makes these our days peculiarly evil; and though, in the deformed countenance of the age, many other very disgusting lineaments may be conspicuous, yet it seems to me to have one leading, prominent, and predominant feature. This, then, I boldly pronounce to be the vice of GAMING, the true delineation of which will amply fill up the remainder of the time allotted to the performance of my present office.

To do this with some degree of method: I first shall enlarge upon its almost Universal Prevalency; secondly, on its pernicious consequences to Society; and lastly, shall dissuade my audience, not only from practising this Vice themselves, but from mixing in the society of those persons who are peculiarly and grossly addicted to it.

First, that Gaming, and this for the highest sums, has encreased in this Kingdom enormously of late, and infected almost the whole body of the People, I believe is a truth to which all who hear me will give a ready assent: It will be confessed, even by many, who have incurred its guilt. I use the strong term Guilt, because I hold it to be a crime, and that of a very deep dye. If I am told that it is no breach of any of the commandments, I answer that it violates two of them: one in the second, the other in the first table; for surely that God, who prohibits every man from coveting his neighbour's property, cannot look with a favourable eye on him, who, though he stakes his own, (which yet is not always the case) does it with the wish of gaining, by the blind means of chance, the property of another man. The danger or hazard which he himself incurs, by no means alters the motive which induces him to run this risque; but when we find that this same motive leads him to triumph in his neighbour's ruin, we must give it a higher place in the list of immoralities than even Avarice itself, for Avarice contents itself with hoarding its own, not in going further,

by coveting its neighbour's wealth, thereby to encrease its hoard: But covetousness, an Apostle says, is Idolatry, and, if so, it is forbidden by the second commandment, as well as the tenth; and though perhaps the term he employs may mean Avarice only, yet the two vices are so nearly allied, that what is affirmed of the one, may justly be predicated of the other.

But is the Gamester really avaricious? Is he not usually found to be the greatest of Spendthrifts? I answer, that it is from amongst the younger of the Tribe only, that examples of extravagance can generally be produced. The seeds of avarice have been early sown in their breasts, and, if in that new, prolific, and effervescing soil, other vices and passions productive of extravagance happen (like annual weeds) to flourish for a season, yet the original plant is all the while striking deep root, exerting its perennial powers, and in the end not only overshadowing but eradicating all the others. Shew me the grey-headed Gamester who expends his money liberally, and not for the mean purpose of drawing into his company the unexperienced in play, whom he may be able to dupe by his superior skill, and I will allow him to be an exception, though a very rare one, to this general truth.

In past times, particularly during the dissolute reign of Charles the Second, we allow that this vice had much

more than sufficient prevalency; yet though it was then authorised by the example of the Monarch, it never extended itself much beyond the higher circles of the world; but now, though far from being supported by such a supreme royal sanction, we find it almost equally practised by every rank of mankind—It descends from the nobleman to his steward, from the steward to the tradesman; from the landlord to his tenant; nay, from the master to his groom. Even the softer sex (I would hope from a desire of being fashionable, rather than from a worse motive) have usurped the more masculine office of opening banques for that species of play, where mere chance, and no degree of skill, assures them on calculation, that they must in the end be the gainers, and that the over-shooting wheel of Fortune must ultimately roll its treasures into their own laps. If flagrant instances of this and every other kind of ruinous gambling are happily not to be found here, go to the Metropolis, and behold there, temples to this blind goddess erected in every street, nay even in those from which they ought in all decency to be excluded, those which lead to the Royal Palace. There may be repeated what a celebrated Latin satyrist said to his dissolute contemporaries in Rome, "Lo, you have exalted Fortune into a goddess, and placed "her in heaven," for such a situation, it is to be feared, is the only heaven of which many of her present votaries have any conception; and let not this insinuation be thought either uncharitable or even uncandid, because,

while it leads me naturally to the second division of my subject, and to treat of the pernicious effects of this vice on Society, it points out a truth to your meditation, by which that insinuation is well supported: The truth I would inculcate, is this—That Gaming, of all other vices, tends from its very nature to withdraw the mind from heavenly affections, to indispose it towards the serious performance of religious duties, and even prompts and encourages the open violation of that capital duty, the holy observance of the Lord's day, a day far beyond the practice of former times, desecrated by this profane misuse of it. On this account many well-intentioned Christians have instituted Schools, and they are become numerous throughout the kingdom, in which children are taught at once the rudiments of learning, and also by early habits to hold that sacred day in reverence through life, in which they first imbibed such instruction; and happy would it be, if not only the infant poor, but the infant rich could be benefited in a similar way; for it is certain, that with respect to this point, their parents generally educate them in a manner little likely to teach them a proper reverence of the Sabbath, if they do not pervert their tender minds by the force of a contrary example. It is therefore, I fear, rather to be wished than hoped, that from these institutions much general good may result, or that in the Prophet's phrase, the next race "will not rise up in their fathers' stead, a generation of "sinful men." The blessing of God, which I devoutly

implore, may do more than we have reason to expect, yet this truth may be hinted, that labour merely human is usually lost, when it attempts to cleanse an impure rivulet through all its filthy channels, if it cannot begin at its putrid fountain head. The time would fail me were I to expatiate on all the destructive consequences to National Prosperity, with which this vice is replete. If it did no more than lead to irreligion, and diminish that righteousness which exalteth a nation, it would surely do more than enough, but it leads also to most flagrant acts of injustice: Hence it is that the small vulgar, in order to recover the little they have lost by play, yet perhaps their all, infest our streets, our highways, and even our houses, with their almost public depredations; and hence it is, that the great, in order that they may punctually pay what they (by a strange perversion of the word) call debts of honour, withhold from their despairing tradesmen their debts of justice; and hence, finally it is, that in all ranks and degrees of this fraternity, we hear of such repeated instances of desperation, which prompts them to inflict death upon their own bodies, and worse than death upon their souls, by perpetrating the horrid crime of Self-Murder.

After what has been said, a very few words need only be added—to exhort my audience, not only to avoid the practice of this vice themselves, but even the company of those who are notoriously addicted to it; for as its per-

nicious tendency has been shewn, it will readily be inferred, that as no society is more dangerous, so all time is much worse than wasted which is passed in the company of professed gamesters. The precept of St. Paul therefore applies to us at present as strongly as it did to those to whom it was at first addressed. These, our modern idolaters, it is true, are not so fully established by the law of the land, as the worshippers of the great goddess Diana were at Ephesus; we need not walk therefore so circumspectly before them as might have been necessary for the first Christian converts, since there is as little dread of their persecution, as, I fear, there is hope of their conversion: All they can do is to call us uncivilized, unsocial, and what they think worst of all, unfashionable beings. But be it our brief answer to boast we are Christians; that we will patiently abide their censure; that we will rather follow the example of our suffering Saviour, than of those who cast lots upon his vesture, the only gamesters on Scriptural record, with whom those of our day can be brought either into parallel or competition.

Let then all those who have attended to me, and on whom this discourse may have made a due impression, join with me in that virtuous, as well as pious wish, so aptly conveyed in the words of the Patriarch Jacob, "O "my soul come not thou into their *Secret;* unto their "Assembly, mine *Honour* be not thou united."

A

CONJECTURAL ESSAY,

IN WHICH THE MEANING OF THE WORD

ANGEL,

AS SOMETIMES USED BY ST. PAUL IN HIS EPISTLE TO HIS GRECIAN CONVERTS, IS ATTEMPTED TO BE ASCERTAINED.

A

CONJECTURAL ESSAY, &c.

It is a decided point among theological writers, that in the three first chapters of the Apocalypse St. John means by the term *Angels of the Churches* their respective principal Christian ministers; and the learned Mosheim, in his Ecclesiastical History, Sæc. Prim. Pars II. cap. 2. sec. ii. tells us, that this term was used by the early Christians previous to Episcopus. His words are as follow; "At quum crescentibus Ecclesiis numerus et Presbyte-"rorum ac Ministrorum cresceret, necessitas ipsa flagi-"tabat, ut Presbyterorum Collegio unus Vir gravitate "ac prudentiâ præstans præponeretur. Is primum *An-"gelus* (Apoc. ii. et iii.) postea a præcipua muneris "parte Græco nomine *Episcopus* dicebatur." But he quotes no authority for this, except St. John: only we have reason to suppose, that as he mentions *Episcopus* singly as a Greek title, he thought *Angelus* derived elsewhere, which in fact it was, being a translation into Greek from the Hebrew. It is certain, however, that St. Paul did not so use the term, except, perhaps, in one particular text, when writing to Timothy, concerning which I shall express my doubts hereafter;

neither does the learned German tell us whence this title was derived. We have, however, as I have said, good reason to believe, that its meaning was of Jewish extraction. For Dr. Lightfoot informs us in his Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations (after much learned explication of the order observed in the Synagogues) "that "there were three who bore the magistracy and were "properly and with good reason called Αρχισυναγωγοι, "Rulers of the Synagogue. Besides these, there was "the public Minister of it, who prayed publicly, and "took care about the reading of the law, and sometimes "preached, if there was not some other to discharge the "office. This person was called Shelliach Zibbor, the "Angel of the Church, and the חזן כנסת, *Chazan*, or "Bishop of the Congregation. Hence he concludes, "that the names of Angels of the Church, and the "Bishops, which belonged to the Ministers of the Sy-"nagogue, were the very same." Vol. II. p. 133. Jennings also, in his Lectures on Godwin's Moses and Aaron, Vol. II. p. 55, speaks fully to the like purpose. On these authorities, therefore, we have good reason to conclude, that in the Christian Churches, to which the inspired Evangelist delivered his Prophecies, this title of distinction had been adopted from the Jewish Synagogues then interspersed throughout Asia, and that Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea applied it to those chief Ministers in their several Christian congregations. That the Jews of this

æra had taken the term or title from the later Prophets seems equally certain from the following passages, in which the Seventy interpreters have rendered the original word מלאך by Αγγελος, which signifies Angel or Messenger. Thus the Prophet Haggai, ch. i. v. 13, calls himself Αγγαιος αγγελος Κυριε, which our English version rightly renders by the term Messenger. By Malachi it is used to denominate a Priest, or High-Priest, cap. ii. v. 7. Αγγελος Κυριε παντοκρατορος εστιν. Of the whole verse our translators give the following version, "The "Priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should "seek the law at his mouth, for he is the Messenger of "the Lord of Hosts." The same Prophet, in the next chapter, verse 1, has this expression, ιδε, εξαποστελλω τον αγγελον μου, &c. the prophetic title of John the Baptist, and as such quoted by our Saviour himself, Matt. ch. xi. v. 12. From all this, therefore, we have reason to think, that the title given as above was not only of an antient date, but that it prevailed also in the Apostolic time throughout Asia, and was a title which the Greeks gave to those principal personages among the Jews, who presided in the Synagogues held in their different regions. Nor will this appear an improbable, though a novel conjecture, to those, who consider that titles of distinction or honour are constantly translated by different nations into their own vernacular idiom. To give a familiar instance or two; were an English Bishop to travel into Italy, he would there be called Il Signor Vescovo; and

in France, before their absurd abolition of titles, Monseigneur l'Evêque, and vice versâ here in England. I see therefore no reason why the Greeks, in such of their cities where Jewish Synagogues were established, as at Corinth, Colosse, &c. might not call the officiating Minister by a Greek title, which exactly corresponded with his Hebrew appellation.

St. Paul, however, as we have said, did not so use it; but when speaking of the principal Ministers in the Christian Churches employed the title Episcopus in its stead. Yet I am apt to think, that when he spoke of the Ministers of the Jewish Synagogue, he applied Αγγελος in its primary Hebrew sense, and that as he wrote his Epistles in the Greek language, he used that translation of the Hebrew מלאך (which literally signifies a Messenger) as the Gentile converts (whom he addressed) had before adopted it in common conversation to express the profession of such Jews, who presided over the Synagogues dispersed in their different cities. To make this conjecture more probable, I shall produce and translate certain texts, confessedly difficult, in St. Paul's Epistolary Writings to his Grecian Converts according to this idea. And if, after my subsequent Comments on each passage, their respective difficulties appear to be entirely, or in a great measure, removed, I will venture to hope for the Reader's candid acceptance of my attempt.

I.

1 Corinthians vi. 3.

Ουκ οιδατε οτι αγγελους κρινουμεν; μηΤιγε βιωτικα;

Common Version.

" Know ye not that we shall judge Angels? how much " more things that pertain to this life?"

Proposed Version.

" Know ye not that we shall judge the Ministers of " the Synagogue? How much more temporal matters, " or things pertaining to this life."

It is universally allowed, that in the passage, of which this verse makes a part, the Apostle is blaming the Christians at Corinth for referring their temporal disputes to the decision of any persons, save those of their own fraternity, and more especially for not referring to such amongst them as were distinguished for their superior sanctity. It is also generally supposed, that they had incurred this Apostolic censure for having applied on these occasions to the Gentile tribunals; but I am rather inclined to think that he here means the Jewish; because this censure follows that, which he had just before passed on their behaviour concerning a case of incest (" that one should have his father's wife") which, he says, was a crime not so much as named among the

Gentiles, and which therefore they probably had referred or might mean to refer, to the chiefs of the Synagogue, then established at Corinth. However this be, the version I have given above will not be affected by it; and this I proceed now to support.

Mr. Locke, in his paraphrase, explains the text thus: "Know ye not that we Christians have power over evil "spirits?" Yet as the future tense, and not the present, is here used by St. Paul, "Know ye not that we shall "judge (κρινουμεν) Angels," a judgment hereafter, put in opposition to present temporal concerns, seems manifestly indicated. Mr. Locke, however, when he adopted his interpretation, must have been satisfied that there was no authority from any of the declarations of Christ, recorded in the Gospel, to believe that men should hereafter judge *good* Angels, and therefore supposed that *evil* ones, over whom the Apostles had a present power, were the beings here meant. But we know that our blessed Saviour said to the twelve (Matt. xix. 28) "Ve-"rily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me "in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on "the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve "thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel;" which declaration, though thought by some divines to be delivered in a figurative* and Eastern mode of expression,

* Amongst these is the latest commentator, my excellent friend Mr. Gilpin; yet still he agrees with me in thinking that St. Paul

appears to me to be the very text, to which St. Paul here alludes, and which certainly affords him a pertinent argumentum ad homines, on the occasion. Let us view it in that form. " Why, ye Christian converts, will ye " go to Law before unbelieving Judges? You have been " taught that the Saints of your Community are to judge " the Chiefs of the Jewish Synagogue, who will make a " leading part of the twelve Tribes at the last day. If " then these Saints are to be vested with so high an au- " thority hereafter, why will you apply at present to any " inferior Court of Judicature, be it either Jewish or " Heathen to decide on your temporal concerns?" Whether any argument more to St. Paul's purpose could be found, were we to take Mr. Locke's interpretation, I must leave my reader to determine. It is, however, certain, that the majority of Commentators, who pre ceded this most sagacious interpreter, have like him, without adverting to the consideration of the future tense, explained the text in a similar manner: Amongst there is D. Calmet, who adds, " Quelques uns croient que sous " le nom d'Anges on insinue ici les mauvais Prêtres;" and refers to St. Chrysostom's confutation of that opinion, which led me to examine the passage; it is to be

here refers to Christ's declaration in the Gospel; for in a note on this text, he says " See Matt. ch. xix. v. 28, where I have " supposed the expression of Christ judging the world to be " figurative; this however hinders not why St. Paul might not " here allude to it as an enforcement of his argument."

found in Ep. ad Corinth. Homily 16th. The Father's words are τινες ενθαυθα φασι τους ιερεας αινιττεσθαι, which corroborates what I have asserted in my Introduction, that the term Αγγελος was applied both to Jewish and Christian spiritual Ministers, and was well known to be so even in the fourth century. This his confutation clearly admits; for it only calls the interpretation, not the term, in question. St. Chrysostom's arguments themselves are much too scholastic for my comprehension. Those, who choose to weigh their force, may find them in the Benedictine edition of his Works, Vol. 10, p. 139, my principal reason for adducing this passage being only to shew that an interpretation similar to mine had been entertained by certain persons in the early ages of the Church.

Having said thus much concerning this single and solitary text, I would wish my Readers not to decide peremptorily on its propriety, till they have examined those that follow it. It is my hope, that they give one another that mutual support, which any of them singly would necessarily want, and like the separate stones in a building when united afford stability to the whole.

II.

1 Corinthians xi. 10.

Δια τουτο οφειλει η γυνη εξουσιαν εχειν επι της κεφαλης, δια τους αγγελους.

Common Version.

" For this cause ought the Woman to have power on " her head, because of the Angels."

Proposed Version.

" For this cause ought the Woman to have power on " her head, because of the Ministers of the Syna- " gogue."

This text is confessedly one of the most difficult in St. Paul's Epistles. It contains two expressions, both of which have, perhaps, never been satisfactorily explained. The former εξουσιαν εχειν επι της κεφαλης does not come within the scope of my present conjectures. I take it to mean, what is universally adopted, " that a Woman when appearing in a Christian congre- " gation ought to have her head covered, if not veiled;" and as such I quit it. It is the reason why, δια τους αγγελους, with which I am at present concerned; and this, I think, neither has, or ever will be satisfactorily explained, if αγγελους be translated *Angels*, that is, celestial Beings.

The learned Selden (so far as we may depend upon the anonymous publication entitled his Table Talk) explained the vulgar translation thus: "The Greek Church "held an opinion grounded upon Genesis, chap. vi.— "The Sons of God saw that the Daughters of Men "were fair, and that therefore Angels fell in love with "Women. This fancy St. Paul discreetly catches, and "uses it as an argument to persuade them to mo- "desty."*

I suppose few of my readers, if any, will be more satisfied with this interpretation than I am. Mr. Locke certainly was not, because with his usual candour he owns, that he does not understand the passage; and yet Selden's Table Talk was a book familiar to him, as he has quoted a passage from it in his Introduction to his Paraphrase on St. Paul's Epistles. Dr. Taylor, the Dissenting Minister at Norwich, thought that the passage was inexplicable, if the common version of the word was retained: he therefore in a supplemental note to his Commentary on the Romans, translates it, according

* In my edition of this entertaining little Book, printed for Tonson, 1716. See Article *Women*. One part of this quotation is in the first paragraph, and the other in the very last. It is apparently a blunder of the first transcriber, rather than an error of the press. The book itself, though containing much curious matter, seems to have been an injudicious compilation of some dull person, who was frequently admitted to the great Selden's table.

to its primary sense, *Messenger;* and somewhat ingeniously supposes, that the Christian converts sent Messengers (αγγελοι) occasionally to inspect the conduct of those female Christian assemblies, in which Πρεσβυτιδες or Presbyteresses presided. He gives indeed sufficient authorities for the existence of such assemblies, but rests the office of Messengers sent for this purpose merely on the probability of the thing, which "is what, from its ap-"parent utility, one might easily persuade ourselves of." His hypothesis, therefore, though plausible, is not supported by absolute historic authority.

Le Clerc too, I find from a note of Dr. Benson* (for I have not his works before me) was as much dissatisfied with the word, when translated *Angels,* as any other scriptural critic; and says (after a long note, which Dr. Benson thinks full of groundless conjectures) "that if "any old copy read δια τας ανδρας instead of αγγελας, "he should have no manner of doubt about this place, "whatever others thought." By which it is clear, that he believed St. Paul's meaning was, that Women ought to be veiled in the Congregation out of respect to the men:† on which Benson remarks, "Now, if we under-

* See Benson's Paraphrase on 1 Timothy—note on chap. ii. v. 8. p. 252.

† Dr. Jeremy Taylor, in his Liberty of Prophesying, makes a passing conjecture founded on an alteration of the text, very similar to this. He would suppose that St. Paul gives this counsel "by reason of the companies of the *young men* there present;"

" stand by *Angels*, the men *who presided in the Churches*, " there will be no occasion for Le Clerc's different read- " ing." We find, therefore, that Benson would understand Christian Presidents by Αγγελοι, which is much nearer the mark, though from what I have advanced in my Exordium, by no means so probable as that which supposes Ministers of the Jewish Synagogue to be the persons spoken of in this place. The translation which I have produced, and which I proceed now to defend, I freely own is supported by no better evidence than that probable one, which I have produced in my prefatory pages. If it amounted to absolute historical evidence, I should not have entitled these Disquisitions *Conjectures;* yet the probability is surely enhanced, when we consider, that in a Grecian city, in which there must have been some Jewish Synagogues (for it is highly worthy of remark, that St. Paul when in this very city of Corinth, converted and baptized Crispus, the chief of one of them *) and therefore still more probable that the inhabitants of it, learning that the Jews gave a name of distinction in Hebrew to these chiefs which exactly

therefore he omits one of the γ's and reads δια τους αγελες. Now αγελη certainly signifies a numerous congregation; but then more alteration must be made in the text, for αγγελες is masculine, αγελη feminine. Therefore (putting the young men out of the question) Dr. J. Taylor should have redde δια τας αγελας, and translated it simply *the congregations*, which, if admissible, would certainly give a better sense than Selden's.

* See Acts, chap. 18. v. 8.

corresponded with their Greek term Αγγελος, would apply it to them, for the sake of such distinction; especially when we know that the Jews had so very small a variety of distinct appellatives in use among themselves. And I think this probability will amount almost to a certainty, when we find (which we shall do as we proceed) that the word thus translated will explain more than this and the former text in St. Paul's Epistles; which, respecting the latter, neither the common one endeavoured to be explained by Selden, the term Messenger substituted by Taylor, the conjectural emendation of Le Clere, or the supposition of Benson will be found able to do: though, amongst all these, I think, that of Benson the most plausible. I shall therefore only add, to corroborate my idea on the present case, that St. Paul, if he here be allowed to speak of the Ministers of the Synagogues exclusively, whether converted or not, will speak in perfect consistency with his general conduct, that of avoiding to give offence to all men; and more particularly to Crispus, who after conversion must have attended those Christian congregations, which the Apostle was in this passage employing his prudence to regulate; one error of which was the practice of suffering women to appear, and even to speak without having their heads veiled; a practice very repugnant to the Jewish custom, which, we know, even at this day subsists, a separation being made in their Synagogues between the male and female part of their assembly.

Having therefore said so much in defence of this version, I should pass on to a third text, did not conceive that an objection may be put to what I have already asserted in the following manner.

If the Greeks translated Αγγελος, a Minister or Chief of the Synagogues, why does St. Luke, and the other three Evangelists, when mentioning such a personage, never use that term, but either αρχισυναγωγος, or some other similar word?

I answer that the Evangelists, and St. Luke in particular, are historians. They address themselves primarily to the Jews, though with a view certainly of giving the future Christian converts equal information. Whereas St. Paul is an author of a different description. He writes to particular Greek congregations, in the Epistolary form, and therefore uses such terms as they have adopted in their own language to express those in Hebrew, for which they needed an equivalent expression. The term Αγγελος, as used in a Christian sense, denoting celestial Beings, was by no means so familiar to them (before conversion at least) as in its primary signification *Messenger*, and therefore we find when he writes to his Greek converts, and has occasion to mention the word as implying a celestial Being, he seldom or ever introduces it without some phrase, or epithet of distinction, as "an Angel of light,"—an "Angel of

" God,"—" Mighty Angels,"—" the voice of an Arch-" angel," &c. &c. It is also observable, that when he is mentioning a Messenger, he avoids using the primary term, but rather Αποστολος, as in the 2d Cor. chap. viii. ad finem, when he speaks of certain Messengers whom he had sent to Corinth to receive donations for the Saints at Jerusalem, who were certainly not of the twelve, no more than Epaphroditus was, whom, when writing to the Philippians, he calls an Apostle rather than an Angel. This, I say, is his usual practice in his addresses to the Greeks; but in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where this term occurs more frequently, than in all his other Epistles conjunctively, he uses the word in the Christian sense simply without explanation, having no doubt of its being sufficiently familiar to the Jews, to whom the Old Testament had thoroughly explained it. All this premised, I think I may venture to produce my next text, which, I hope, the same version will clearly elucidate.

III.

Colossians ii. 18.

Μηδεις υμας καταβραβευετω θελων εν ταπεινοφροσυνη και θρησκεια των Αγγελων, α μη εωρακεν εμβατευων, εικη φυσιωμενος υπο του νοος της σαρκος αυτου.

Common Version.

"Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a "voluntary humility, and worshipping of Angels, in- "truding into those things which he has not seen, vainly "puffed up by his fleshly mind."

Proposed Version.

"Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a "voluntary humility, (or submission) to the superstition "of the Ministers of the Synagogue, intruding into those "things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by "his fleshly mind.

That θρησκεια is used in either a bad or a good sense; either for idolatrous and superstitious, or true and genuine worship, is so certain that I shall not make a parade of borrowed erudition to defend my using it here in its bad one. My principal concern is to shew, that the same interpretation which I have given to Αγγελος in the two foregoing texts, clears this of much obscurity.

This, I think, will be allowed by those who strictly examine the whole chapter referred to, and particularly attend to it, v. 16, to its conclusion. They will find that St. Paul is exhorting his Gentile Converts to assert their Christian liberty, and emancipate themselves from the observances of every part of the Jewish ceremonial. Meats, Holy-days, New-Moons, and the Sabbath are directly mentioned. But who can point out any other passage in our Apostle's writings, in which he mentions the worship of Angels, amongst those Jewish Ordinances, either enjoined by Moses, or sanctioned by tradition, which he so frequently warns his converts against practising? Calmet indeed, in his note on the text, says, "that certain Jews did worship them." Clemens of Alexandria, he further adds, cites a very antient book entitled *The preaching of St. Peter*, which accuses the Jews of paying religious worship to Angels, and Archangels, and even to Months, and the Moon. Celsus reproaches them with the same superstition. Tertullian says that Simon and Cerinthus preferred the mediation of Angels to that of Jesus Christ. Josephus and, after him, Porphyry affirm that the Essenians in their profession engage themselves by oath to preserve faithfully the names of the Angels, and the books of their sect. Nevertheless I cannot help thinking, that if this heresy had been common in St. Paul's time, we should have found it reprobated in more places than in this single passage.* I know too that there

* Since I wrote my explication of this text, I have seen a

was an old heretical sect among Christians who worshipped Angels, as thinking the Son of God too superior a Being to be addressed, except through such inferior mediators; that these persons were called Αγγελικοι, or Angelists, and that the Council of Laodicea condemned that heresy, of which Theophylact quotes the Canon. But this heresy must have arisen long after the time of St. Paul. The learned Mosheim gives us good reason to think that there was no Council, properly so called, till about the middle of the second century, and the Council of Laodicea was certainly not held before the fourth, though the precise year is uncertain. I may therefore surely with confidence assert, that no such superstitious worship of Angels could exist at the time when the Apostle wrote this Epistle either in Colosse, or any of the Jewish or Christian Congregations throughout Greece. That many Judaizing Christians, and also Ministers of the Synagogue resided in that city,

pamphlet lately published by the very learned Mr. Bryant, intitled *Observations on a Controverted Passage of Justin Martyr*, at the end of which the text in question is commented upon: when I was surprised to find that the word θελων, for which he would substitute ελθων, is the only difficulty that he finds in the passage, and which he allows "does not affect the context" (see page 23). It therefore certainly does not affect my interpretation of the word Αγγελων, which interpretation, if inserted in his own paraphrase, would be found to accord with it full as well, if not better, than *by the doctrine of Angel worship*, a doctrine, or heresy, which I am persuaded, was never held by any Jew, nor indeed by any Gentile converted to Christianity in St. Paul's time, however it might be imputed to Christians in the subsequent century, when Justin Martyr flourished.

I think, there can be no manner of doubt. Therefore if we consider St. Paul as persuading his Converts, not to be deceived by men, who would wish them so far to humble themselves in a voluntary manner to the observance of Holy-days, New-Moons, particular Meats, &c. &c. which the Jewish Ministers prescribe, in superstitious adherence to the ceremonial part of the Mosaic Law now abrogated by Christ, the whole passage has a clear and just meaning, perfectly consistent with St. Paul's instructions to the Galatians, of which indeed this chapter is a kind of synopsis. If any thing more be wanting to prove this to be the true interpretation of this text, I will only add, that the repetition of ταπεινοφροσυνη in the 23d verse seems to tie down the whole passage to one precise purpose, that of disregarding the Judaizing seducers of the time, and to this only.

So far then a new, yet the same version of one word has enabled me to give an easy and intelligible sense to three distinct, and allowedly very difficult passages in the learned Apostle's writings, which, I may be bold to say, could not have been done by the application of any other term, instead of that common one, which our translation has made use of. I am not so anxious about my next trial of its efficacy, or so sanguine in my hopes of its being generally approved, because the version, as it now stands, is capable of a good Evangelical interpretation, and of which a fine one may be found in the XX. Sermon

of the present Bishop of Worcester, preached at Lincoln's Inn on the following text.

IV.

1 Timothy iii. 16.

Και ομολογεμενως μεγα εστι το της ευσεβειας μυστηριον. Θεος εφανερωθη εν σαρκι, εδικαιωθη εν πνευματι, ωφθη αγγελοις, εκηρυχθη εν εθνεσιν, επιστευθη εν κοσμω, ανεληφθη εν δοξη.

Common Version.

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the World, received up into Glory."

Proposed Version.

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of the Chiefs or Ministers of the Synagogue, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the World, received up into Glory.

My reasons for thinking that this interpretation of the Greek word may be here preferable to that in our present version are the following:

1. Αγγελοις is here introduced singly, unaccompanied with any appropriating phrase or epithet, such as, seen

by the *holy* or *heavenly* Angels, &c. whereas St. Paul's usual, if not constant custom, was thus to fix the meaning of the term in his Epistles to the Gentiles, though he found no necessity, as I observed before, to do so when writing to the Hebrews.

2. A gradation or climax seems to have been intended by the Apostle in this delineation of the mystery of godliness, from Christ's manifestation in the flesh, and reception into Glory; or, in other words, from the time of his incarnation to his ascension: and if so, his being "seen of "Angels," would have been a circumstance more appositely introduced immediately after the manifestation, that is, in the second step of the climax, than where it now stands: For that our Saviour was *seen of Angels* immediately after his nativity, as well as throughout his mission, there can be no doubt. This reason however I should not much insist upon, did I not think it strengthened by a third;

3. Which is, that in the place where it now stands it is clearly opposed, according to my interpretation, to the next which immediately follows, *seen by the Jews, preached to the Gentiles;* so that the whole will clearly admit the following paraphrase,—"Without doubt great "is the mystery of our Holy Faith: God was made appa- "rent in a human body, and proved to be so by the "Holy Spirit, through which he worked such stupendous "miracles, seen by the chiefs of the Jewish nation, but

" only seen, for they believed not, though they saw such " miraculous credentials of his Divinity: he was then " preached unto the Gentiles by me Paul, and other " Apostles; in consequence he was believed to be the " Messiah through the whole Roman empire; and lastly " he was received up into heaven."

I would not however have it thought that I should have offered to apply my interpretation of the word to the text in question, had I not found that in three much more difficult ones, I had applied it to a good purpose. If then even here it conveys as true a Gospel sense, and is as consistent with Christ's ministration, as the common one, making at least equally a part in the Apostle's account of the mystery of godliness, it collaterally tends to support those which have been produced before it. I have said that I did not think my alteration of the version here essential; and I know of no commentator except Benson, who wished to change the passage. But he, after translating Αγγελοις Messengers, puts it as a quære, that it might mean the Apostles themselves: a quære which, I fancy, my reader, after what I have written concerning the other texts, will not think incumbent on me to answer in a controversial manner; and less so, if he reads the Doctor's note. See Benson's Paraphrase on Six Epistles of St. Paul, p. 273.

I proceed now to consider another text, and apply to it the same mode of interpretation, with a view rather to

corroborate the arguments I have employed on the three first versions, than to aim at an establishment of this new sense, exclusive of the old one. For I do not think that this, which I have now to offer, is of more importance than the last. Both of them only tend to shew, that one and the same alteration of the present version in these two last, is equally natural and easy with the three principal ones.

V.

1 Timothy v. 21.

Διαμαρτυρομαι ενωπιον τϑ Θεϑ και Κυριϑ Ιησϑ Χριϛϑ, και των εκλεκτων Αγγελων, ινα ταυτα φυλαξης χωρις προκριματος, μηδεν ποιων κατα προσκλισιν.

Common Version.

" I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, " and the elect Angels, that thou observe these things " without preferring one before another, doing nothing " by partiality."

Proposed Version.

I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and those elect Converts, the Ministers of the Synagogue, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.

The two usual interpretations of the phrase *elect Angels* in this text are, that St. Paul here means either

those celestial Spirits, who are considered as the peculiar guardians of the Christian Church, or the seven Angels, who stand before the throne of God mentioned in the Revelations.

To every explanation of this sort I venture to make the following objections.

1. The interpretation of presiding Angels has no authority, unless we suppose St. John at the beginning of the Apocalypse to mean celestial beings, when he speaks of the Angels of the seven Churches, a supposition now universally deemed erroneous.

2. The epithet *elect* is never given to such beings either in St. Paul's writings, or in any passage in the New Testament.

3. The usual epithets are *holy*, *heavenly*, or the like, which might seem most proper here to have been given them, the epithet *elect* being universally applied in the apostolic writings to that part of mankind, who had been made converts to the Christian Faith; insomuch that it is frequently used singly to denote *the chosen*, without a substantive.

4. We have no ground from Scripture to affirm, that God elected Angels, or raised them to any superior degree

above that, in which he had originally created them. He might, and indeed did, select or single them out for some peculiar purpose; as when he sent Gabriel to Mary, &c. &c. &c. But it would be contrary to the usual Scriptural Phraseology to call them on this account *elect*. Thus St. Jude, when he speaks of the rebel Angels, tells us that "they kept not their first estate." Hence we conclude, that they were created what they were, as Archangels or otherwise at the beginning, and that the different angelic Hierarchies suffered no posterior change, except that of falling from their respective dignities.

My own interpretation I thus endeavour to defend.

In my note on the 2d number I observed that Crispus was a converted Chief of the Synagogue, resident at Corinth, and thence deduced an argument that it was with a view not to offend converts of such consequence that St. Paul commanded women to veil their heads when they appeared in a Christian congregation, consisting of Jewish as well as Gentile proselytes; and I think it also highly probable that in the text before us, St. Paul added these personages to the solemn charge, which he gave to Timothy, not to ordain Ministers, or give any promotion or office in the Church without observing the strictest impartiality; because such men, of all others, would be the most offended, if they observed him culpable in this discharge of his Pastoral function.

I have said also before, that St. Paul, when he used the term Αγγελος, accompanied it with an epithet, when meaning celestial beings, especially in his Epistolary correspondence with his Gentile converts, but less, if at all so, when writing to those of Jewish extraction. Thus, in the last number, writing to Timothy, he uses it without an epithet, *seen of angels*, because, though he takes it in what I would call the Ethnical sense as a word which they had translated and adopted from the Hebrew, and not as meaning a heavenly Being, he knew Timothy, being a Jew, would rightly understand it: yet in this place he accompanies it with one, viz. εκλεκτος, *chosen*, i. e. because converted, to difference his meaning from the former, where the term Αγγελος predicates an unconverted person, as I have there mentioned. I therefore incline to think, that to understand the passage thus is more easy and pertinent than either of the former explanations.

But if we rest upon Mosheim's authority as quoted in the introductory part of this Essay, and believe with him that the title of Angel preceded that of Bishop in the early Christian Church, as denoting a principal personage in the congregation, and in the same sense, in which St. John decidedly uses it; then it might seem no improbable conjecture, that St. Paul, in the text before us, uses it in the same identical sense. It appears however from the preceding chapter, that Bishops either were, or

were to be, elected in the Church of Ephesus, because the Apostle there specifies what sort of character the person ought to have, who was elected into that office, and as he does not say more than that "if a man desireth the office of a Bishop, he desireth a good thing," it might favour Mosheim's opinion, that Bishops were posterior in point of time of election to Αγγελοι, and that probably St. Paul permitted Timothy then, for the first time, to elect them. Yet as St. Paul wrote his Epistles many years before St. John wrote his Apocalypse, and as the former never applies the term Αγγελος to a Christian congregational President, my opinion is that in this text, as in all the former, he rather means a President of the Jewish Synagogue; though here one who is converted to Christianity, and therefore of greater consequence and authority than a common Jew, who had held no such office in that Synagogue, from whence he had seceded before he became a member of the Christian Fraternity.

AN

EXAMINATION

OF THE

PROPHECY,

CONTAINED IN THE 24th CHAPTER OF ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

INTRODUCTION.

It will, perhaps, be supposed from some things advanced in the following pages, that the Author is among those, who reject all *double senses* in their explication of Scripture. But he is far from being of their opinion. He thinks that many things in the Mosaic writings and those of the Jewish Prophets admit, nay, even demand such a two-fold interpretation. But he thinks also that this mode ought to be very cautiously, if ever used, when the prophecies delivered by Christ, or his Apostles are the subjects of investigation; and for this reason: The Books of Moses, part of the Psalms and Prophecies, clearly refer to what the Jewish œconomy was only a type or shadow of, and therefore are to be applied to their reality, the Christian dispensation. But in the code of this final dispensation we find few Prophecies except this in question, which were ever construed to have a double sense; for even the Apocalypse (so far as he understands Mr. Mede's Synchronisms) has only been interpreted to convey one sense in different and distinct visions. He thinks therefore that a double meaning should in this propheey be sedulously avoided, because it is expressly said in it, that *all* things shall be fulfilled in the generation, in which it was delivered:

and therefore when it is now evident that only one of them has been fulfilled, though the other has been supposed by some divines to be predicted in the same place and words, the Infidel has but too good grounds to reject the whole as a fiction.

There is another thing in these pages, which seems to require previous explanation. It is where a distinction is made between the Prophetic and Parabolic Style. The author well knows that the term παραβολη is very frequently used in Scripture for Prophecy, and even (as in the Book of Job) for a mere speech or answer: but he knows too that a Parable and a Prophecy are two distinct things, and are always delivered in Scripture by two modes of expression. The Prophetic Style is marked chiefly by its strong hyperbolical figures and glowing metaphors. The Parabolic, on the contrary, by the most familiar images; divested of every thing that may be termed rhetorical and sublime. Invention it has in a great degree (as being of the nature of Apologue or Fable) and that oftentimes truly poetical.

The Author thought he perceived this difference between two parts of our Saviour's discourse to his Disciples on the Mount of Olives, and therefore he used these terms of distinction on an occasion, where such distinguishing terms seemed to him to elucidate his general subject.

AN

EXAMINATION, &c.

THE Design in these sheets is to prove, that the Prophecy of our Saviour refers entirely and exclusively to the destruction of Jerusalem, and not to the end of the World: which, if proved, refutes the grand objection of Infidelity, founded on these words at the conclusion of this Prophecy, "Verily, verily, this generation shall not pass away before all these things be fulfilled."

I begin with stating the occasion of its delivery, which arose in the Temple, when his Disciples were admiring its superb architecture, and were told by Jesus in a general way, that the time approached when it would be totally destroyed. This raised their curiosity to know the precise time; therefore immediately after, when he was retired to the Mount of Olives, "His Disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us when shall these things be; and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the World?" Matthew, ch. 24, v. 3.

St. Mark agrees with St Matthew perfectly as to the occasion and place, but puts the Question differently—

"And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives over against the Temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew, came unto him privately saying, Tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign, when all these things shall be fulfilled." Mark, ch. 13. v. 3.

In like manner St. Luke: "And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign shall there be when these things shall come to pass?" ch. 21. v. 7. By St. John this Prophecy is not recorded.

On comparing the three passages above, we find that it is only in the first, that two Questions are put; the one concerning the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, the other of the end of the World. A sign is asked for in them all, but in St. Matthew only a sign *of their Master's coming* is mentioned. And accordingly in that Evangelist the sign of the Son of Man's coming is mentioned, as well as his coming in the clouds of Heaven: but in the two others the sign of the Son of Man is omitted, but his coming in the clouds with power and great glory inserted.

We see, therefore, though there is a general harmony in the accounts of the three Evangelists, yet that the narrative of St. Matthew is the most circumstantial, and therefore principally to be attended to. Indeed it appears

to me, that it would be a very easy thing to interpret either of the two other accounts in an exclusive sense, as relating merely to the destruction of Jerusalem, and that it is even impossible to give them any further meaning. For in them one question only is asked, and therefore (as just reasoning leads us to expect) only one answer is given. But in St. Matthew's narrative two questions are asked; not only that which relates to Jerusalem, but that which relates to the end of the world: and to both these, I hope to shew that two distinct answers are given; not indeed in the place where, according to the general notion, the answers are prophetically blended together, but distinctly and separately. Yet only so separated as to have a manifest connexion with one another in the same discourse, and to the same persons, and from the mouth of the same divine teacher.

If I succeed in this attempt, there will be found no occasion to alter our own version, and to suppose with Bishop Newcome and others, that συντελεια τυ αιωνος means the end of the (Mosaic) age: for this very phrase occurs in chapter 13, v. 39 of the same Evangelist; where Christ explaining the parable of the sower, says, "the harvest is the *end of the world*." And again chapter 28, v. 20, where taking his final leave of his disciples, our Saviour says, "I am with you always, even "unto the *end of the world*;" in which two places, the exactitude of our translation speaks for itself. The Greek

terms therefore neither can, nor ought to be wrested to a more confined and partial meaning in the present passage.

These things being premised, I now venture to give it as my opinion, that this second question is not answered before we come to the 31st verse of the 25th chapter, and that the three Parables, which intervene between the 42d verse of the 24th chapter, and the Prophecy just mentioned, (the two former of which inculcate the duty of watchfulness, and the third the improvement of the talents) are delivered by our Blessed Saviour as cautionary precepts, resulting from the uncertainty of the time of the destruction of Jerusalem; which, though confined within the limits of one generation, the precise time could not be determined. To this the first Parable of the Householder evidently points, as well as the second of the ten Virgins: and the immediate purpose of the third also seems to be that of inculcating to his hearers the necessity of their being zealous in the use of the talents committed to them, viz. the supernatural powers given them of propagating the Gospel during the interval between his ascension, and their flight from Jerusalem. I say this seems the immediate purpose; for it is to be remembered, that all this passed in one *private* conference between our Lord and Peter, James, John, and Andrew. I am however far from insinuating, that they have not a general import and inculcate truths, which it will behove

all Christians to attend to, and precepts which all Christians ought to practise till the consummation of all things. For it is an excellence common to all our Saviour's discourses, that those which are delivered on a particular occasion, and even for a private purpose, extend much further, and are, if not always, yet generally of universal import. There is also a peculiar beauty in the present chain of parables. They arise one from another in a remarkable climax. The first the most simple—the second more varied in point of imagery—and the third so artificially (if I may so say) contrived by concluding with the unprofitable servant's being cast into outer darkness, as to introduce the parabolical, as well as the prophetical account of those judicial sentences to be pronounced on the wicked, as well as the righteous, at the end of the world. I call it " parabolical account;" because it is delivered more in that stile, than in the other. The separation of the sheep and the goats—the addresses to each concerning clothing the naked, visiting the prisoners, all being of the parabolic species of writing, and herein very different from the high figurative stile, which occurs in the prophetic delivery of an answer to the first question. It is indeed this very different mode of describing the advent of Christ to destroy Jerusalem, and his second advent to judge mankind at the end of the world, on which I found my opinion, that the former cannot possibly include the latter. Let the two passages be placed one against the other, to make this more apparent.

The description of the Son of Man coming to destroy Jerusalem, and separate his elect (believers) from the unbelieving Jews.

Matt. chapter 24. v. 30.

" And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in " heaven,* and then shall the tribes of the earth (or land) " mourn. And they shall see the Son of Man coming in " the clouds with power and great glory."

31. " And he shall send his Angels with a great sound " of a trumpet, and they shall gather his elect from one " end of heaven to the other."

The description of the Son of Man coming to judge the righteous and the wicked on the last day.

Matt. chapter 25th.

Verse 31. " When the Son of man shall come in his " glory, and all the holy Angels with him; then shall he " sit upon the throne of his glory.

32. " And before him shall be gathered all nations; " and he shall separate them one from another, as a " shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.

* Here, according to the prophetic manner, *the sign* and coming of the Son of Man is vested in clouds; and his power and great glory, how strongly soever exhibited, is not personally exhibited; and what he does is done by the ministration of Angels, to gather together only his elect.

33. " And he shall set the sheep on the right hand, " and the goats on the left.

34. " Then shall the King say to them on his right " hand, Come, ye blessed children," &c. &c.

Here, in parabolic phrase, he comes personally with his holy Angels, and appears sitting on the throne of his glory—takes upon himself the office of separating the righteous from the wicked, under the parabolic images of sheep and goats.

If then these two descriptions were given as declaratory of one and the same event, viz. the end of the world, we must be obliged to think, that the former was expressed in terms very incompatible with the latter, and with all the other various passages in the New Testament, which relate to the last day, and a future judgment. Whereas, if we confine the meaning of the Prophecy to the gathering together of Christians, and saving them from that destruction, which Christ's coming at that time was to bring on the devoted Jews, the description is in such a sense full and complete. If we extend it to the other, it becomes inadequate and defective. Besides, it seems highly improbable, that, if the divine speaker meant it so far to extend, he should have given this second description so immediately after the first, with which, as we have already shewn, it is so closely connected by the three

parables, which intervene: all of which inculcate truths peculiarly to be attended to by his apostolic hearers, who had been told, that though the destruction of Jerusalem was to be compleated in that generation, in which they then lived, the time when could not be ascertained, no more than that of Christ's second coming in συντελεια τε αἰωνος to judge the world.

It must however be confessed, that these two passages in the Propheey—"*Then shall they see the sign of the* "*Son of Man coming*, and *Then shall they see the Son* "*of Man*," (which latter seems to imply the actual sight of him still more directly,) are strong indications, that he would appear personally at the time. Yet when we know, that he did not so appear, and that among the many signs and prodigies, which were then seen, and which Josephus has recorded, none of them were understood by either Jews or Christians to be a personal appearanee, the true believer will eonelude, *from the event*, that his *power* only was manifested, and the glory, with which he was invested, was still shrouded in clouds, in the same manner, as when he led the Israelites through the wilderness: and will therefore agree with me, that the omission of clouds in the description, of what ean be construed in no other sense than that of the last day, is no weak foundation for believing, that he was enshrined in them, when he came to take vengeance on the Jewish

nation, for which they have the authority of a prophetic expression used by all the three Evangelists, in which this passage occurs.

I come now to a more close examination of the Prophecy, of which I mean not to give a perpetual comment, because this seems unnecessary: but rather to prove, in a series of Annotations, that every circumstance mentioned in it may justly be applied to the first question, asked by the Apostles, but by no means to the second.

Matthew 24. v. 3. And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples come unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

4. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed, that no man deceive you.

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Verse 3. From this to the 13th nothing occurs, which is not clearly prophetic of what was to happen between the time of his ascension into heaven, and the beginning of the siege.

Every expositor, I believe, agrees in this. In Bishop Newcome's Observations on our Lord's conduct, as a Divine Instructor, this matter is treated copiously. See page 185.

5. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

6. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in diverse places.

8. All these are the beginnings of sorrows.

9. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

10. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

11. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

12. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

13. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

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Verse 13. The end, ο τελος, clearly means the end of the Jewish calamities. If the text means, that every person who endures to the end of the world were to be saved, this would be a strange declaration in this place; but that he who continues a true believer in Christ, shall

14. And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all Nations: and then shall the end come.

15. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand.)

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not be included in the general wreck of Jerusalem, is perfectly consistent with the context.

14. The Gospel of the kingdom means here not a general conversion to Christianity, but that it shall be preached and known to be a Religion universally. It was preached at Rome before Titus laid siege to Jerusalem. The *whole world* is one of those hyperbolical expressions, like *for ever*, denoting only a large extent, either of place or time, common to Prophecy. It frequently meant Rome and the Roman Empire.

15. See Bishop Newcome on the verse, where he explains the time of the abomination of Desolation to be that, when Titus made his first three encampments round the City: and the abomination to be the appearance of the statues of the Heathen Deities, which the Romans carried on their standards. The *Holy Place* he believes to mean the precincts of the City; these, as well as the City itself, being accounted holy. In proof of this he quotes Maccabees, ch. 10, ver. 11, where it

16. Then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains.

17. Let him which is on the house-top, not come down to take any thing out of his house.

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appears to be declared so by King Demetrius, "Let Jerusalem also be holy and free, *with* the borders thereof." However this be, the next verse

16. Manifestly proves that it relates to Jerusalem, and not to the end of the world, when it says, "Let them, which be in Judæa, flee to the mountains," i. e, when Jerusalem is besieged. So that whatever may be the precise meaning of the *abomination of Desolation*, it is sufficient for us to consider it in the prophetic way, in which Daniel used it, and in which Christ repeated it.

17. From this to the 27th verse nothing occurs that does not exclusively predict what would happen to the emigrants from Judæa, as well believers, as others. All of them in such circumstances would look to a deliverer, and false ones might mislead them, as history informs us was the case. These verses, therefore, are only admonitions to Christ's *then* elect, for whose sake, he says, that those days of calamity should be shortened. We well know (God be blessed) that there have since been days which deserve not that name; and yet the end of the world is not come; therefore, as the completion of

18. Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

19. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days.

20. But pray ye, that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day.

21. For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the Elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

23. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

24. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that (if it were possible) they shall deceive the very Elect.

25. Behold I have told you before.

26. Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he

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Prophecy fails in this particular, but holds good with respect to the destruction of Jerusalem, we seem authorized to assert, that the divine Prophet did not in this place allude to the end of the world.

is in the desert, go not forth; Behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

27. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

28. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

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27. I do not think that the similitude of the lightning necessarily means, that Christ's coming should be sudden; but that the effects of it should be extensive through all the land of Judæa. It is to be observed, that this verse is the first in which his coming (παρουσια) is mentioned; and it is mentioned in conjunction with the coming of the Romans, who were to be the Ministers of his vengeance.

28. This coming of the Romans is, in my opinion, clearly marked by the eagles gathered together, in allusion to the Roman standard. I know some divines, among whom is Mr. Gilpin in his late Exposition, are of a different opinion; but to me this verse appears to be in the true prophetic style; neither too clear for the time in which, or for the persons to whom it was delivered; nor too obscure to be fully developed by the event, that is, when the Prophecy was accomplished.

29. Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.

30. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of

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29. That is, the tribulation prior to that day, on which the siege commenced: for to those prior days every part of our Saviour's speech has hitherto referred. And now, as might be expected, his style rises into that highly figurative one which, from the hyperboles employed, is a specimen of what is justly called prophetic writing, and which Isaiah and the greater Prophets had heretofore used to describe the fall or rise of nations, or any other great temporal event. Concerning the usual prophetic terms, and their explanations, to which the Jews were accustomed, much might here be quoted from various divines. It is sufficient here to quote Bishop Hurd's ninth Sermon on the Style of Prophecy in general; and his sixth on Christ's second coming; that part particularly, which treats of this identical Prophecy, though I am sorry to find, that he disagrees with me, when he says, "I know that this Prophecy admits a "secondary sense." See Sermon VI. p. 171.

30. If the sign of the Son of Man be taken literally, it may be construed to mean those celestial prodigies

Man in heaven: and then shall all tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.

31. And he shall send his Angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his Elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32. Now learn a parable of the fig-tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh.

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attendant on the siege, of which Josephus is full, and which are also recorded by Tacitus in the fifth Book and thirteenth Chapter of his History. But as Christ speaks here in the prophetic and figurative style, *heaven* may mean the capital, and *the tribes of the earth* the dispersed Jews throughout Judæa; and the *sign* the appearance of the Roman army, the ministers of vengeance. However this may be, it is clear, that the imagery can have no similitude to the last day, or day of judgment; for here he comes not to judge, but to destroy his enemies, and save his Elect. This has been noted before, when the difference of the two accounts was pointed out in the preliminary remarks.

31. This verse is in the high prophetic style, and with this verse it ceases, and in the next descends to the parabolic.

33. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

34. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

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34. No artifice of interpretation can make these words imply any thing either more or less than what they do: they expressly declare, that "this generation (the gene-"ration in which he was speaking) shall not pass away, "till all these things be fulfilled." Now, if this prophecy, as far as it has gone, has a double sense, if it has predicted the last day, as well as the destruction of Jerusalem, what can we say to it, except that it was only particularly a true Prophecy. One part of which Infidelity itself must allow to have been fulfilled; yet the other part the firmest believer dares not say has been so, because many generations have passed away, and the last day is not yet come. *All these things*, therefore, have not been fulfilled. On that account, it is of the highest importance to those, who would vindicate the truth of Christianity, as I have here attempted to do, to hold that this prophecy relates only to the first question asked by the Apostles, "When shall these things be?" and to seek for an answer to their second in the remaining part of Christ's discourse, where I have shewn they may be sure to find it; not indeed fully answered no

35. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

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more than the former was, and this for the reason given afterwards in the 36th verse. But before I comment on that, I must here observe that Dr. Clarke thinks it to be an extraordinary ingenious conjecture of Grotius's to make ημερα εκεινη, *that day*, in verse 36, opposed to ταυτα τα παντα, *all these things*, in verse 34, and would have the sense to be "the destruction of Jerusalem shall "be presently, but the last day of Judgment is known "to none but God." And Dr. Benson, who seems to favour this conjecture (See his Introduction to his Paraphrase on St. Paul's Ep. p. 30), though he does not allow of a double sense in this, or indeed in any Prophecy, thinks it would be a more just division of the chapters, if the 25th of St. Matthew began at the 36th verse of the 24th. For my own part, I am a friend to no divisions of chapters whatever, as I think they have but too frequently perplexed the meaning of the New Testament-writers, and particularly in this place; where one individual discourse of our Saviour with four Apostles privately, is frittered into two portions so very injudiciously. Neither can I admit the conjecture of so celebrated a critic as Grotius in this place, to be more than ingenious. It would scarcely have been true, even

36, But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the Angels of Heaven, but my Father only.

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if instead of ταῦτα παντα, ετερη had been added to ημερα, and the translation of " But of that *other* day knoweth " no man," &c.; for though some subsequent passages might be construed as relating to the day of judgment, as the time of Noah before the flood (see v. 38, 39) yet there are others that will not, as v. 40, 41, where two men shall be in a field, and two women grinding at a mill, of which one of each shall be taken and one left; which, as I have said in another note, contradicts the subsequent description of the last judgment, where *all* shall be gathered together, and *all* separated by Christ himself. Yet I am ready to allow, that the general and repeated admonitions to watchfulness, which are continued through the rest of his discourse, sometimes in direct precepts, at others by parabolic inference, introduce his answer to the second question as pertinently, as his caution against deceivers and false Messiahs was introductory to the first: and that both these introductions, though delivered only to the four Apostles, were meant to be of universal use and application to all Christians in all ages. Yet to declare one truth *directly*, but in such a manner that another truth may be deduced from it *consequentially*, is a distinction, which should

37. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

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always be attended to, and in no place more accurately than in the whole of this most important discourse. To explain myself still more clearly, by one historical instance, where thousands might be adduced. In the time of Cromwell's usurpation, when Fifth Monarchy men and other fanatics were so much abroad, the cautionary advice at the exordium of this discourse ought to have been as much attended to by Christians of the time, as it was primarily by the Apostles, to whom it was delivered. Yet nobody will say, that the Prophecy had *in a double sense* any allusion to that turbulent period of English history.

36. The divine Prophet here declares, that the precise time and season of the destruction of Jerusalem is known to no man, no, not the Angels, &c. If then this declaration was made by Christ, when speaking only of what may be called, great as it was, but a mere local circumstance, when compared with that most momentous one, the general judgment of all mankind, the Apostles had all reason previously given them to believe, that to their latter question no direct answer could be given; and that they must rest satisfied, as in the

38. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark,

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former ease, with a general description only of the two events.

But we must not quit this verse without observing a remarkable differenee in the three Evangelists, as they appear in the parallel plaees. That of St. Matthew, as above, says "the time is known to *the Father only*." St. Mark adds, that it is known not to the Angels in heaven, *neither to the Son*, but to the Father only, eh. xiii. v. 32. In St. Luke, the whole sentence is omitted. The words of St. Mark, therefore, have given a handle to Soeinians and others to question the foreknowledge of the Son. But, I think, their arguments will have little weight with those, who eonsider how frequently Christ speaks to his Disciples with a referenee to his humanity only. It would be well, however, for the eollators of MSS. of the Greek Testament, to examine whether the words in St. Mark ουδε ο υιος are not an interpolation. I mention this in passing, though the text in no way affeets my argument.

37. The Propheey being finished, I shall here only give a general note on what oeeurs between this and

39. And knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

40. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

41. Two women shall be grinding at the mill: the one shall be taken, and the other left.

42. Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

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v. 43, and observe that this sequel, as it may be called, has occasioned the general suspicion, that the last judgment was here treated of, as well as the destruction of Jerusalem. But what can the words " One person to " be taken, and the other left," &c. have to do with the last judgment, where *all* are to be taken and judged, and none to be left? But when we understand them as descriptive of those who shall escape from the horrors of the siege, viz. of emigrant believers and unbelievers promiscuously endeavouring to save themselves, it becomes naturally descriptive of what must and did happen in that temporary confusion.

41. Here, after inculcating the duty of watchfulness to his Apostles, their Divine Master enforces it by those Parables, which have already been so sufficiently noticed, as here to require no further comment.

I have therefore only to add the following short inferences, by way of recapitulation.

1st.

Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed within the time of that generation, in which the Prophecy was delivered; therefore so far the Prophecy is undeniably true.

2dly.

The Son of Man did not come to judge the world in that generation; because we know, that he has not yet come for that purpose: therefore the Prophecy was not given as predictive of that event.

3dly.

The Son of Man did not appear personally at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, nor did he then say, that he would judge the righteous and the wicked; therefore his advent for that purpose must be declared, if at all, in some other place. But,

4thly.

He did declare that he would thus come, and made this declaration in one and the same conversation, which he had with his Apostles. He declared too, that his appearance would be personal, sitting on his throne, and separating the righteous from the wicked, and that severally he would pronounce sentence on each: therefore

he has given distinct answers to both the Apostolic questions; so that the former cannot be supposed to include the latter, without implying a palpable and quite unnecessary tautology.

THE END.

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